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**Masculinity, modernist form and the ends of Empire  
in Virginia Woolf's fiction**

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## Abstract

### 'Masculinity, modernist form and the ends of Empire in Virginia Woolf's fiction'

The study traces the development of Woolf's methods for fictional representation of masculinity; it argues that chief among her narrative strategies for defamiliarising the public world of men and for bringing male characters into critical perspective is her use of autoethnography (Pratt 1992). The most explicit statement of Woolf's construction of masculinity is in the polemical, pacifist essay *Three Guineas* (1938), which makes direct connections between masculinity, war and the rise of Fascism in Europe, and between masculine dominance in the domestic sphere and tyrannical dictatorship in the international sphere of imperial rivalry and war. The study explores connections between the work of Bourdieu, especially his analysis in *Masculine Domination* (2001) of the persistence in the present of archaic gender divisions and relations of dominance and subordination between men and women, and Woolf's analysis and representation of relations of gender and power in the modern, early twentieth-century world. A reading of the novels shows how Woolf's outside perspective on men and masculinity shapes her thematic focus and formal style, and the development of the autoethnographic method is traced from its early manifestations to a more systematic deployment in the later work. The sequence of novels depicts the slow demise of a Victorian/Edwardian hegemonic model of colonial/imperial masculinity reflecting British imperial decline and the catastrophic impact of the First World War upon the old order; in the later novels an uncertain new gender order is glimpsed as Woolf demonstrates both continuity and change in the acquisition of gender identities. The study also reviews recent developments in the continuing evolution of Woolf's literary and political reputation with an account of her steadily emerging reputation as a public intellectual.

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## Abbreviations

VO	<i>The Voyage Out</i>
ND	<i>Night and Day</i>
JR	<i>Jacob's Room</i>
CR	<i>The Common Reader</i>
MD	<i>Mrs Dalloway</i>
TTL	<i>To The Lighthouse</i>
O	<i>Orlando: A Biography</i>
AROO	<i>A Room of One's Own</i>
TW	<i>The Waves</i>
TP	<i>The Pargiters</i>
TW	<i>The Years</i>
TG	<i>Three Guineas</i>
BA	<i>Between the Acts</i>
D	<i>Diary</i>
L	<i>Letters</i>

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **Introduction**

### **1) Outline and rationale**

This study of the construction of masculinity in Woolf's fiction focuses upon her representation of men as one aspect of a more general aim, evident throughout her work, of representing gender relations undergoing historical change. A reading of the novels as depicting the slow decline of a Victorian/Edwardian model of hegemonic imperial masculinity looks behind the characterisation of men to trace the development of a range of methods for representing men coming to terms with (or resisting) changing conceptions of manhood and masculinity in 'post-imperial' England after the First World War. It focuses in particular on Woolf's rhetorical, stylistic techniques for bringing into critical perspective the instability of men's position of dominance in that world. The largely invisible but significantly shifting nature of relations of gender and power in a period of rapid social change are discussed. This introductory chapter outlines relevant debates and areas of research in Woolf Studies in order to locate the study in its discursive context and to demonstrate that a comprehensive account of Woolf's fictional construction of masculinity is both opportune and needed. A review of relevant literature is presented with the aim of providing a rationale for the choice of methodology in the study. Aspects of the methodology and theoretical approach are then briefly elaborated in two sections which illustrate the study's aim of integrating a chronological account of the development of Woolf's methods for bringing men into perspective as an object of study, and a thematic approach to a reading of the novels. The first of these sections discusses two key transitional texts from the writer's mid-career, *Orlando* (1928) and *A Room of One's Own* (1929), in terms of their relevance to the development of Woolf's methods for critically constructing masculinity. The second section summarises findings from a research exercise aiming to construct a 'typology' of male characters in the novels. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of the argument and content of the chapters which follow.

There has been no comprehensive study of Woolf's representation of masculinity, and it is perhaps surprising that there has been little recognition so far of the need for one. Undoubtedly, questions about the nature of masculinity are actively explored throughout Woolf's work, and her representation of men in the novels and her critique of male psychology and 'infantile fixation' in discursive texts such as *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas* have not been ignored in the critical literature. However, given the complex history of the reception of Woolf's work and the still contested nature of her intellectual legacy, Woolf studies and the scholarship which sustains it have only relatively recently shifted from a mainly reactive focus upon recuperating her literary reputation and intellectual standing from the narrowness and diminishment produced by negative stereotyping. Hostile comment and criticism animated by anti-feminist sentiments and/or by dismissal of Woolf as a too privileged intellectual snob and/or a depressive aesthete have tended to obscure the continuing relevance of her methods and insights.<sup>1</sup> Recently the focus has slowly but steadily shifted towards recognition of the breadth and depth of her active intellectual engagement in a wide range of political, cultural, literary, artistic, educational and entrepreneurial activities: as, variously, novelist, essayist, biographer, diarist and publisher; researcher and theorist of the history and practice of women's writing; journalist and cultural commentator; literary reviewer and critic; teacher and lecturer; political writer and activist. This list is not necessarily exhaustive, yet all of these roles and activities inform and are reflected in the wide range of her published work. As a result new aspects of Woolf's intellectual character and achievements have emerged — a realignment of critical attention which can be illustrated by two examples of relevance to this study. First, it has been recognised that Woolf's political engagement consisted not only of support for the suffrage movement but also of involvement in, for example, debates about democratic inclusiveness in education for women and working class adults and the promotion of intellectual and cultural education among the reading public at

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<sup>1</sup> The discussion in Chapter Two of the reception of *Three Guineas* gives some detail of this complex history.

large.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, recent scholarship (especially that building upon Brenda Silver's work on Woolf's reading notebooks of the period)<sup>3</sup> has explored Woolf's methods and the scope of her historical, biographical and newspaper research into gender inequalities during the 1930s for her 'novel-essay' *The Pargiters*. This ambitious and unfinished project attempted to integrate fiction and historical/sociological commentary within the genre of family saga; but these two strands of writing proved hard to integrate and were finally published separately as *The Years* (1937) and *Three Guineas* (1938).

The implications of such reassessment of Woolf's intellectual legacy have not yet been fully explored. One strand of enquiry leading to a new assessment of Woolf's thinking about the social and psychological construction of masculinity as a necessary adjunct to her (already recognised) contribution to understanding the construction of femininity in the late Victorian/Edwardian period is pursued in the present study. Given the slow, contested process of Woolf's hard-won, but eventual, inclusion as a feminist modernist writer in a male-dominated literary canon, it is hardly surprising that much of the extensive critical commentary on her work has focused upon questions of female agency and the struggle for self-actualisation of women characters in the novels. The historical emergence of women writers and the innovations of a modernist feminist writing style are widely acknowledged as significant themes in Woolf's essays, but critical commentary has seldom focused on the characterisation of men in the novels, or on comparing Woolf's methods of representing gender relations with those of her contemporaries. Woolf's provocative comment that 'the history of men's opposition to women's emancipation might be more interesting than the history of that struggle itself',<sup>4</sup> not only implies that relations of gender and power are necessarily relational and that at the root of a social system problematically predicated upon female subordination and masculine domination, are a kinship, class and economic system and a division of labour which depend upon and perpetuate inequalities of gender and class, but also that male opposition to, or support

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<sup>2</sup> Cuddy-Keane, M. 2003. *Virginia Woolf, the Intellectual, and the Public Sphere*; Snaith, A. 2000. *Virginia Woolf: Public and Private Negotiations*.

<sup>3</sup> Silver, B. 1983. *Virginia Woolf's Reading Notebooks*.

<sup>4</sup> *A Room of One's Own* 2000, ed Barrett, 50-1.

for, change in the gender order, is worthy of investigation. Male recalcitrance, dependencies, sense of victimhood, wavering self-belief, and attempts to come to terms with changing roles and spheres of gendered activity, are aspects of Woolf's fictional representation of men which have so far been relatively hidden within the continuing critical process of investigation and reappraisal of her methods. Given the various obstacles discussed above and the contested nature of the territory, it is therefore not surprising that a detailed argument about the chronological development of Woolf's critical approach to masculinity has not been produced before the present study.

Discussion of topics relating to masculinities in Woolf's work has typically appeared as an adjunct to a main focus on establishing the key lineaments of Woolf's feminism, her pacifism and political opposition to war and the kinds of 'masculinism' and masculinity which promote war and aggression. For example, the commentary in such key critical texts as Jane Marcus's *Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy* (1987), and more recently a group of investigations into Woolf's interest in Fascism (e.g. Hussey (1992); Pawlowksi (2001); Erin Carlston (1998)) have mapped the broad outlines of Woolf's arguments and critical stance vis-à-vis men and masculinities in relation to fascism and war. Other steps towards a more comprehensive account of Woolf's critical construction of masculinity have been made in studies focusing on her anti-imperialism (Phillips 1994; Snaith 2005, Carr 2010), and in Jane Marcus's 'Britannia Rules *The Waves*' (1992), a ground-breaking post-colonial reading of the 'submerged mind of Empire' as it expresses itself in *The Waves*. Patrick McGee's suggestion in 'The politics of modernist form; or who rules *The Waves*?' (1992), that Marcus here articulates 'a new space for reading *The Waves* – a space that should become the enabling ground for future readings of the novel' has, however, not evidently been realised, nor has it stimulated further investigation of Woolf's account of the demise of hegemonic British imperial/colonial masculinity.

This study fills this gap, answering to an evident need for an account of Woolf's construction of masculinity which traces its development in her fiction and essays. It

explores how the appearance in Woolf's middle and later work of an elaborated critical analysis of the mentality of late Victorian and Edwardian gentlemanly masculinity, and how the demise of this hegemonic model -- even as it is (potentially or actually) superseded by a hegemony of violent Fascist masculinity -- is presaged by an earlier development of argument and method. The study answers a series of questions which, I argue, it has only become possible to pose due to recent developments in Woolf studies. Recent scholarship has led to the emergence of a 'political', 'anti-imperial', 'anti-Fascist' and publicly 'intellectual' Woolf, in addition to the already established and 'iconic' versions of Woolf as feminist, as aesthetic and highly experimental modernist, and as survivor of mental illness and of anti-feminist 'custody battles' over her literary estate and reputation.

One fundamental question is both at the heart of and determines the structure of this thesis: how does Woolf construct masculinity in her fiction and political essays? My argument is that Woolf's late work, and especially *Three Guineas*, contains her most explicit statement about the nature of a particular kind of masculinity and the consequent psychological and material effects of gender and power dynamics upon individual women and men in an unequal system of kinship, gender and economic relations. In *Three Guineas* Woolf adopted the most elaborated version of her characteristic narrative positioning as outsider ('the daughter of an educated man'), as pacifist, and as autoethnographer<sup>5</sup> -- and, partly in consequence of the overtly political nature of authorial positioning, this text has had perhaps the most complex and controversial reception of all her works. This endpoint in Woolf's development of a method is taken as the starting point for this study; from whence the emergence of the autoethnographic method for observing and representing masculinity is plotted chronologically from the early novels of her literary apprenticeship, through the 'war trilogy' (*JR*, *MD*, *TTL*) of her middle period, to the late work. Woolf's methods for bringing men into critical view -- observing as if from afar with an anthropologist's perspective -- appear in embryonic form in her earliest fiction and are developed most fully in the hybrid form of historically, sociologically and

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<sup>5</sup> Pratt, L. 1992. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*.



psychologically informed fiction and polemical writing of the mid- to late 1930s, which led eventually to the publication of *The Years* and *Three Guineas*.

The publication in 1998 of Pierre Bourdieu's *La domination masculine* (English translation, 2001) is a further *sine qua non* for this study. Together with other of his works, this text opens the way to an analytical exploration of Woolf's methods for representing relations of gender and power in the novels. An example of this is in the analysis in Chapter Four of the dramatization in *The Waves* of the acquisition through formative accretion of experience in the lifetime of the six characters, of gendered dispositions and *habitus*. Bourdieu's methods for objectification of the social world also throw light on Woolf's analogous techniques of defamiliarisation and her adoption of an anthropologist's perspective in *Three Guineas* and elsewhere to objectify and satirise the public spectacle of institutionalized masculine power. That Woolf and Bourdieu both share an interest in exposing the ludic quality of social interactions is evident in the style and content of their writing generally, and the connection is indicated by a number of references to Woolf's work in several of Bourdieu's theoretical works. However, it is in *Masculine Domination* that a distinctive affinity between them becomes evident in terms of their mutual interest in exposing the mechanisms and effects of the 'rites of institution' which establish and maintain masculine dominance symbolically and concretely in the key institutions of family, church and education. Bourdieu quotes extensively from *To The Lighthouse* and focuses on sections of *Three Guineas* to illustrate his argument in *Masculine Domination* that the perpetuation of a traditionally gendered division of labour and the maintenance through 'symbolic violence' of relations of domination and subordination between the sexes, underlie the historical continuities that exist between 'traditional' and modern societies. His analysis of traditional Mediterranean society is based on his own fieldwork in Kabylia, Algeria, in the 1950s; while his account of gender relations in modern society draws upon contemporary empirical studies of gender inequalities for statistical, ethnographic data on corporate and social life in Europe, North America and elsewhere, and also upon Virginia Woolf for fictionally nuanced illustration of modern relations of

gender and power. While Bourdieu uses Woolf for illustration and not for theoretical elaboration, he acknowledges the theoretical importance of her acute female gaze upon masculine performance and her identification of the 'hypnotic power' and certain symbolic dimensions of the system of domination, which extract compliance from women and subordinated men while rendering its own mechanisms invisible.

## **2) Literature review**

Woolf's experimentation across genres opened new ways of representing experience, including processes of construction and negotiation of gender identities. Her insights into these processes are unusual in fiction, as Bourdieu noted; and this is also an under-explored aspect of Woolf's work. In line with her belief that reform must come from progressive action *within* social classes rather than from without,<sup>6</sup> the types of masculinities represented in any depth in the novels are almost entirely of the English middle and upper-middle classes (i.e. her own milieu); these types either perform in conformity or in various forms of resistance to or deviation from a fetishised criterion of 'the English gentleman' (which itself is a classic example of hegemonic masculinity). Key texts in Masculinity Studies have informed the approach and shaped the arguments made in analysing and interpreting Woolf's representation of men in her fiction.<sup>7</sup> As a relatively recently designated field of sociological enquiry which developed in response to feminist analyses of patriarchy and gendered power relations, Masculinity Studies has generated a broad range of methods and strands of enquiry, some of which are valuable in this context because, taking a historical approach, they seek to redress the 'invisibility' of men as gendered subjects. While men are not invisible in Woolf's writing, Woolf's methods of constructing men in her writing and the rhetorical strategies she employs to position herself in relation to the masculine world as critical observer and satirist are another

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<sup>6</sup> 'The Leaning Tower' (1940).

<sup>7</sup> Key texts include: Connell, R. W. 1987. *Gender and power: society, the person and sexual politics*; Tosh, J. 1994. 'What Should Historians Do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain' (1994); Roper, M. 'Between Manliness and Masculinity: The "War Generation" and the Psychology of Fear in Britain, 1914-1950', (2005); Horlacher, Stefan (ed.), *Constructions of masculinity in British literature from the Middle Ages to the present* (2011); Brod, Harry 'The Construction of the Construction of Masculinities' in Horlacher (2011).

under-researched aspect of Woolf studies. Brod's formulation that it is the task of men's studies 'to recapture the specificities of masculinities as specific and varying social, cultural, and historical formations alongside femininities, rather than as falsely universalized norms' (20) is clear and useful. It is helpful in this study's attempt to look 'behind' nineteenth-century constructions of femininity in order to 'find' the elements and motives which make up Woolf's construction of masculinity. The parallel strategy of exploring contemporaneous efforts to criticise and move beyond the historical specificities and limitations of gender relations as experienced in the late Victorian and Edwardian period in England and in Europe, such as in the socialist and utopian writing of Olive Schreiner, Edward Aveling and Eleanor Marx, has also been adopted in order to make comparisons and to place Woolf's critical 'outside' stance in constructing masculinity in the context of contemporary intellectual debate.

Brod's reference to Hamlet's dilemma, in which 'being' a man seems to require him to don his armour and 'take arms against a sea of troubles', also accords readily with Woolf's portraits of typical masculine performance. For example, Mr Ramsay's displacement of his fear of nonentity into imagined heroism by means of loud recitation of 'The Charge of the Light Brigade', so that when and if he fails, he can at least 'die standing' or be found 'upright' at his post, highlights the importance of military bearing in his infantile conception of what it is to be a man, as Bourdieu and others have noted. Brod's suggestion that, as in the Hamlet example, one could go through literature 'with the aid of the lens of masculinity studies, to discover and rediscover over and over again that ... what have passed for descriptions of "human nature" have really been prescriptions for masculinities' (2012, 22) has thus helped to confirm the value of reading Woolf's novels closely with the aid of these various theoretical lenses.

As suggested above, the approach has been informed by the assumption that behind Woolf's history of women's writing, in the still partially obscured account of women writers' (and in particular of Woolf's) representation of male characters in changing times, is to be

traced Woolf's construction of masculinity: i.e. 'behind' and in relation to, conventional masculine constructions of femininity. Thus Woolf's identification (in the imprisoned, ideally feminised figure of 'the Angel of the house' in *A Room of One's Own*) of the crippling, censoring effects of male-defined conventions and proprieties upon a female author's imaginative scope, defines the initial limits of her early apprenticeship as a novelist. Strategies of indirection characterise her first two novels, while the inspired stratagem of the structural absence of the hero of *Jacob's Room* (1922), and the emptiness of his room, marks the moment when she finds her 'own voice', and from then on she positions herself structurally and formally, through various narrative devices, as an *outsider*, looking across the divide of gender at the public world of men. While it is not until *A Room of One's Own* (1929) that the 'Angel' is symbolically killed and dispatched, this text and its companion transitional text, *Orlando* (1928) with its androgynous hero/heroine (not absent, but evading conventional gender norms), mark a significant turning point in Woolf's representation of men and masculinity. (These two texts and their transitional role in this strategic development are discussed in the concluding section of this chapter.) While Woolf's strategies in the early novels are indirect; in the later work it is evident both in the ceaseless process of Woolf's formal experimentation and re-shaping of the literary genres she inherited, and in her lifelong, active search for ways of breaking and reorienting the dynamic of traditional relations of gender and power, that an increasingly explicit political critique of patriarchal social relations is developed. This involves steadily shifting, both in terms of form and methods, away from what she saw as an essentially masculine materialism and egotism and towards what she conceived of as an 'eyeless', almost perspective-less narration beyond and untrammelled by the conventions, distortions (and egotism) of gendered norms.<sup>8</sup>

As a pioneering researcher and theorist of women's writing, Woolf both charted and drew inspiration from the experience of women writers in the past, showing intimate understanding of the difficulties (especially those shared with nineteenth century forebears

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<sup>8</sup> This unfinished search is discussed in detail in Banfield, A. 2000. *The Phantom Table: Woolf, Fry, Russell and the Epistemology of Modernism*.

such as Austen, George Eliot and the Brontës) in attempting to find a foothold in and then gradually to appropriate for their own uses a tradition of authorship dominated by male authority and expectations. Gilbert and Gubar's detailed exploration demonstrates how such women authors were constrained to produce texts 'whose revolutionary messages are concealed behind [the] stylized facades' of the novelistic conventions they inherited from their male predecessors.<sup>9</sup> They describe them as being 'in some sense imprisoned in men's houses [...] locked into male texts, texts from which they could escape only through ingenuity and indirection' (83); and they suggest that women from Jane Austen and Mary Shelley to Emily Brontë (like the twentieth century American poet H. D. 'who declared her aesthetic strategy by entitling one of her novels *Palimpsest*') 'produced literary works that are in some sense palimpsestic, works whose surface designs conceal or obscure deeper, less accessible (and less socially acceptable) levels of meaning' in order to manage 'the difficult task of achieving true female literary authority by simultaneously conforming to and subverting patriarchal literary standards' (73).

Some rhetorical devices in Woolf's early fiction accord with Gilbert and Gubar's examples of strategies of evasion and escape from imposed spatial and literary confinements: both *The Voyage Out* (with its 'spatial imagery of enclosure and escape')<sup>10</sup> and *Night and Day* (in its play with tropes of courtship and dance) illustrate this kind of adaptive approach to the traps and burdens of gendered literary inheritance. Woolf experimented with such methods throughout her writing career and in her middle period developed ways to turn exclusion and confinement into a deliberate form of self-positioning so as to take a distanced, appraising perspective on men. As discussed above, *Jacob's Room* marks this turning point.

Whereas in nineteenth-century struggles of literary succession women writers could be compared (by Gilbert and Gubar) with their male counterparts (men 'swerving from their predecessors'; sons locked in combat with their literary fathers in an oedipal 'battle of strong equals'), in the early twentieth century battles of succession took place on radically

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<sup>9</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, 1979. *The Madwoman in the Attic*, 74.

<sup>10</sup> *op. cit.*, 83.

different historical and literary terrain. Woolf took pains to define herself within and against a male-defined modernist aesthetic and (more or less) in alignment with innovative female writers such as Dorothy Richardson.<sup>11</sup> In the novels of the 1920s she begins to take an increasingly independent path of formal experimentation in addressing these fundamental questions of female authority and history. She employs a specifically modernist kind of 'ingenuity and indirection' in writing in the shadow of the 'catastrophic shift' in human and gender relations created by the First World War. In the novels of this decade 'the absent brother' and the 'dead good soldier'<sup>12</sup> stand for a collapsed and vanishing old order, gendered as masculine, symbolically designating an empty space in which unanswered questions are posed.

### 3) Methodology

Comparison of Woolf and Bourdieu in terms of certain shared intellectual aims, demonstrates that, despite the many obvious differences between their cultural, historical worlds, both are interested in attempting to explain the persistence in the present of forms of gendered behaviour and habits of mind which derive from an archaic sexual division of labour. They share a desire to uncover the often invisible, subtle but laborious ways in which gender inequalities are historically reproduced, despite the appearance these give of being immutable, 'eternally' given. Their shared aim is to reveal (in Bourdieu's formulation) 'the *historical* mechanisms responsible for the relative *dehistoricization* and *eternalization* of the structure of the sexual division and the corresponding principles of division'.<sup>13</sup> Both use historically informed analysis to undercut and expose the mystifications of gender categories in modern society. Woolf's anatomy of Victorian/Edwardian family dynamics provides Bourdieu with a link between two worlds, ancient and modern, opening a space for historical analysis of a social order structured

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<sup>11</sup> e.g. in 'Modern Fiction', 'How it strikes a contemporary' (1932).

<sup>12</sup> In *No Man's Land, The Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century* (1994) Gilbert and Gubar explore key differences 'between male and female experiences of postwar mourning and melancholia' (314). They contrast the 'surprising strength' of woman survivors ('the daughters of men') with the anxiety felt by those who mourn an absent generation of successors who will not return.

<sup>13</sup> *Masculine Domination* 2001, vi-viii.

around gender divisions, male dominance and female submission. His 'detour' via the exotic culture of Kabylia so as to look historically at our own world was prompted in particular by two aspects of Woolf's approach: her satirical appropriation of techniques of anthropological observation to direct her gaze of fresh astonishment at male public ceremonials in *Three Guineas*; and the 'incomparable' lucidity of her female gaze in *To The Lighthouse*, directed upon the figure of Mr Ramsay making the 'effort that every man has to make to rise to his own childhood conception of manhood' (69).

In *Masculine Domination* Bourdieu evaluates the potential of Woolf's narrative stance for his own sociological analysis of contemporary relations of gender and power. He singles out her 'magnificent' identification of 'the hypnotic power of domination' as one of the key mechanisms of mystification whereby ideology transforms 'history into nature, [...] cultural arbitrariness into the *natural*'. The efficacy of Woolf's lucid, distanced gaze in neutralizing the mystifying effects of ideology prompted him to undertake his own project of 'scientifically objectifying the truly mystical operation of which the division of the sexes as we know it is the product' – a project which he calls 'an objective archaeology of our unconscious'. Bourdieu takes Woolf's focus on 'ritual consecration', 'mystic boundaries', 'mystic rites' ('this language, the language of the magical transformation and symbolic conversion produced by ritual consecration') as an invitation 'to orient research towards an approach capable of grasping the specifically symbolic dimension of male domination' (pp. 2-3). Woolf, as Bourdieu suggests, 'resorts to an ethnographic analogy, genetically relating the segregation of women to the rituals of an archaic society':

Inevitably, we look upon societies as conspiracies that sink the private brother, whom many of us have reason to respect, and inflate in his stead a monstrous male, loud of voice, hard of fist, childishly intent upon scoring the floor of the earth with chalk marks, within whose mystic boundaries human beings are penned, rigidly, separately, artificially; where, daubed red and gold, decorated like a savage with feathers, he goes through mystic rites and enjoys the dubious pleasures of power and dominion while we, "his" women, are locked in the private house without share in the many societies of which his society is composed.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Three Guineas*, 121

Referring to Marcel Mauss's 'collective expectations' and Max Weber's 'objective potentialities',<sup>15</sup> Bourdieu seeks to identify that which 'social agents discover at every moment'. These are the everyday 'indices and signs designating things to do or not to do' which are 'specified according to the positions and dispositions of each agent; 'they are inscribed in the physiognomy of the familiar environment, in the form of the opposition between the public, masculine universe and private, female worlds, between the public space [...] and the house' (57). These expectations and potentialities operate as 'continuous, silent, invisible injunctions ... which, inscribed in the order of things, insensibly imprint themselves in the order of bodies' (56).

Bourdieu's use of Woolf as a source of ethnographic illustration of masculine domination in the modern world suggests both a method and rationale for an analysis of Woolf's fictional construction of masculinity. Bourdieu's exploration of Woolf's observation of men is limited to celebrated passages in *Three Guineas* – where men robed in ceremonial attire at public events are seen through an anthropologist's eye as painted 'savages', and in *To The Lighthouse* – where the outward verbal exchanges between the married couple, Mr and Mrs Ramsay, are interwoven with inner-directed, non-verbal but brutally frank psychological/affective exchanges to reveal a vulnerable, infantile dependency beneath the husband's masculine posturing. This study extends the scope of exploration much further to analyse Woolf's developing use of the autoethnographic method in all of the novels and the two main political essays, and in doing so makes use of Bourdieu's theories of practice and of gendered *habitus*. The two sections which follow illustrate aspects of the methodological approach used in this study. The first section looks closely at two of Woolf's texts to illustrate a key stage in the development of her critical analysis of masculinity; the second section looks broadly across the novels to survey the variety of Woolf's fictional representation of men.

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<sup>15</sup> Mauss, M. 1990. *The Gift: The form and reason for exchange in archaic societies*, London: Routledge; Weber, M. 1970. *The interpretation of social reality*, London: Joseph.



#### 4) *Orlando* and *A Room of One's Own* as transitional texts

*Orlando: A Biography* (1928) and *A Room of One's Own* (1929) are both significant as transitional texts in the development of Woolf's methods and formal experimentation: the one as a 'mock-biography' which makes play with conventions of historical periodization and stability of gender identity; the other in terms of its address to a specific audience of young, educated and therefore unprecedentedly socially mobile women, and in its broaching of a new theme in literary and social history: the theory and practice of women's writing. In terms of Woolf's ceaseless formal innovation these are significant texts produced during a mid-career shift towards new kinds of writing – towards the dramatic/poetic experimentation of *The Waves* and the 'Essay-Novel' format of the unfinished draft for *The Pargiters*, which 'was to switch between fictional chapters telling the story of the Pargiter family and non-fictional historico-sociological essays on the condition of women'.<sup>16</sup> In addition, in terms of Woolf's strategic self-positioning as an author who has found her voice (as she said of the style she had developed in the writing of *Jacob's Room*), and who has achieved psychological and professional independence, having become successful as an author and come to terms with -- 'put to rest' – the affect of parental loss (as she said of the process of writing *To The Lighthouse*), these texts mark a stage both in choice of subject matter for research and writing and also in the strategic development of methods for authorial positioning in relation to a male dominated public sphere and a male defined literary heritage.

*Orlando* – a literary 'escapade' celebrating Woolf's love affair with Vita Sackville-West, 'a Defoe narrative for fun' wherein the 'fluidity and artifice of gender'<sup>17</sup> implied in the new discourses of sexology and psychoanalysis are taken at face value, a biographical text which satirises the generic notion of biography as the lives of great men, and other literary conventions, including 'my own lyric vein'<sup>18</sup> – boldly announces a newly 'feminine' modernity: 'a new state in which sexual difference is no longer a principal determinant of

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<sup>16</sup> Mephram, J., 1991. *Virginia Woolf A Literary Life*, 125.

<sup>17</sup> Sandra Gilbert in Briggs 1994. *Introductions*, 193.

<sup>18</sup> 14 March 1927, *A Writer's Diary*, 105.

human fate'. In blandly stating '[t]hus there is much to support the view that it is clothes that wear us' (180), the narrator seems already to claim that 'sexual identity is not so much a biological fact as socially constructed'.<sup>19</sup> Freud's newly formulated theory of sexuality, that pre-oedipal girls are not yet female -- that, like Orlando, 'girls start male and become female ... first "masculine" then "feminine"' -- is echoed in Orlando's subversive history. Furthermore, Woolf's putative 'history of sexuality' seems to outline 'an increasing feminization of culture' as Orlando 'becomes more "feminine" as the advance of the Victorian age outlaws sexual and gender freedoms, and imposes a 'compulsory heterosexuality' on its members'.<sup>20</sup> Not only is the stability of gender questioned in Woolf's 'escapade', but the conventions of historical and literary/historical periodisation are overturned, as 'the terms of history' become 'Orlando's story'.<sup>21</sup> His/her childhood and pre-adolescence take place in the Elizabethan period, the sex change and self-realisation in the seventeenth century, 'young ladyhood' in the eighteenth, the nineteenth being characterised by a 'patriarchally defined female maturity (wedlock, maternity)', and the 'apocalyptic "new world"' of the twentieth century by 'a mature "moment of being", a liberating encounter with "the Captain self, the Key self, which amalgamates and controls them all"' (Gilbert 204; *Orlando* 214).

This transitional text anticipates themes that are developed in the later work -- both major themes that shape the work and submerged themes which shadow it. For example, Woolf's role as 'a sort of metabiographer -- a writer who both deploys and criticises the form in which she is working' -- parodies 'the scholar who presumes to know the "truth" about the "life" and "self" of his subject. Each of us, she argues, as she endows Orlando with a host of costumes and careers, has many "lives" and many "selves"' (Gilbert 206). Ann Banfield suggests that in 'Street Haunting' (1927) city walking (of a *flâneuse*) is 'a metaphor for the self's activity', and that *Orlando* is a 'Russellian biography' in that '[i]ts androgynous persona is "built up" of selves as opposed to the singularity of 'Captain Self,

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<sup>19</sup> Richard Danson Brown and Suman Gupta, eds, *Aestheticism and Modernism: Debating Twentieth Century Literature 1900 – 1960*. Abingdon: Routledge/Open University, 2005, 295.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 298.

<sup>21</sup> Gilbert, 203.

the Key self'. Her suggestion that in *Orlando* Woolf effects the release of a 'separable wandering self'; a 'paring down' of the gendered egotistical "I" in fiction as she reaches towards a 'true' or 'real self' (in terms of Bertrand Russell's philosophical realism) indicates a new narrative standpoint for the representation of gendered identity.<sup>22</sup> The novel's play with costume and gender instability – the idea that it is clothes themselves that 'keep social order in place by continuing to indicate maleness or femaleness'<sup>23</sup> looks forward to the photography and anthropology of *Three Guineas* and its exposure of the social façade of masculine power and gravitas produced by official costume and ceremony. Also in some respects *Orlando* as 'public history of the private woman'<sup>24</sup> traces certain lineaments of the history of women's writing which Woolf turns to in *A Room of One's Own*.<sup>25</sup>

In a stark moment of domestic comedy in *A Room of One's Own* Woolf identifies a key element of the female role, an aspect of her all-giving and forgiving role as 'Angel of the house': women's capacity to perform the 'social magic'<sup>26</sup> of producing a magnified image - 'as looking glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size' (32). This daily task of producing self-confidence in men is vital so that the wheels of industry and commerce may turn, so that the 'struggle for existence' may go on – requiring as it does 'gigantic courage and strength – creatures of illusion as we are, it calls for confidence in oneself' (31). Continuing her interrogative and exploratory mode of research and reflection in *A Room of One's Own*, and pursuing the question as to why 'women do not write books about men' (256), Woolf concludes that it is because 'if she begins to tell the truth, the figure in the looking-glass shrinks; his fitness for life is diminished. How is he to go on giving judgement, civilizing natives, making laws' etc. ... 'unless he can see himself at breakfast and at dinner at least twice the size he really is?' (32-3).

<sup>22</sup> Banfield, 200, 202; *Orlando*, 308, 310.

<sup>23</sup> Brown and Gupta, 295.

<sup>24</sup> Gilbert, 206.

<sup>25</sup> '*Orlando* as a companion narrative to *A Room of One's Own*, both [are] efforts to write first as a female writer, then as an 'androgynous' writer' (Brown and Gupta p. 311).

<sup>26</sup> Bourdieu's term: *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991), p.111.

Reflecting on her research in the British Library into what men have written about women and fiction, women and poverty, the narrator/researcher notes her own anger at what she has read, and the anger of one writer in particular, Professor Von X in his monumental tome on *'The Mental, Moral, and Physical Inferiority of the Female Sex'*. Her own anger is explicable: 'One does not like to be told that one is naturally the inferior of a little man'; but 'How explain the anger of the professors?' – anger which is 'disguised and complex, not anger simple and open' (29). Her conclusion is that the anger, like the power it seeks to conceal, is relational: '[p]ossibly when the professor insisted a little too emphatically upon the inferiority of women, he was concerned not with their inferiority but with his own superiority. That was what he was protecting rather hot-headedly ... because it was a jewel to him of the rarest price'. Behind men's anger is fear of criticism; behind wounded vanity is protest at some infringement of his power to believe in himself. Hence Woolf's emphasis throughout her work upon arguing dispassionately and her constant efforts to avoid the traps of egotism in her own writing (evident too in her criticism of male modernists): 'When I read what he wrote about women I thought, not of what he was saying, but of himself. When an arguer argues dispassionately he thinks only of the argument; and the reader cannot help thinking of the argument too' (31). Her search for a dispassionate stance was to lead her beyond the notion of the androgynous writer, as developed in *A Room of One's Own*, to the stance of an 'eyeless' narrator in *The Waves*.

##### **5) Male Characters in the novels: a 'typology'**

'How Woolf does men' is a bare and simple way of putting it, but this formulation also captures the general intent of this study, and suggests a further, less theoretical approach to exploring Woolf's reading and writing of men in her fiction. Through a close reading of the novels informed by the theoretical framing discussed above, a classification of Woolf's male characters was undertaken as an interim stage in the research process.

Undoubtedly, with a few significant exceptions Woolf's male characters belong

predominantly to the English upper middle classes (her own milieu), and to this extent at least they are type-cast. However, while some of Woolf's minor male characters are deliberately satirically reduced to stereotypes or caricatures, in general Woolf's characterisation – even of men of a very specific class fraction – is too subtle, varied and inventive for crude types to predominate. Even so, certain broadly typical themes relating to Woolf's representation of male characters and characteristic masculine attributes do emerge across the range of novels. Thus the evolution through the novels of gentlemen of the public school type and of 'old Empire men' are particular examples of a 'type'. The decisive role of a patriarchal kinship structure in promoting privileged fathers and brothers at the expense of female kin is an underlying theme, evident in the recurring and sometimes unmistakably biographically-moulded versions of father figures and brothers throughout the novels. A *paternal* axis links such differently characterised father figures as the sadistically tinged Willoughby Vinrace (*The Voyage Out*), Mr Hilbery (*Night and Day*); Mr Ramsay (*To The Lighthouse*), Colonel Pargiter (*The Years*) with the jealous fathers and dictators in *Three Guineas*; while a *fraternal* axis links the absent figures of Jacob and Percival, and is biographically linked to Woolf's own brother, Thoby, who died young of illness contracted in Greece.

Another theme is the progressive metaphorical 'petrification' into statues and monuments of particular versions of performed masculinity. In the early novels Woolf plays with the idea of approximation to Classical Greek ideals of male beauty and heroic fortitude, as influenced by contemporary interest in Hellenism,<sup>27</sup> and exemplified by warrior heroes in the Elgin marbles in the British Museum. Lovelorn young women (Mary Datchet in *Night and Day* fantasizing about Ralph Denham; and Fanny Elmer in *Jacob's Room* pining for the absent Jacob) invest their lovers with Hellenised qualities. The trope culminates in Jacob's wandering and posing in ancient Greek sites, caught by the gaze of female

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<sup>27</sup> Carden-Coyne, A. 2009. *Reconstructing the body: classicism, modernism and the First World War*; Mosse, G. 1996. *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*.

admirers and already part monumentalised by the female narrator.<sup>28</sup> These comparisons foreshadow the development of devices for representing masculine performance as a kind of petrified adhesion to norm-based criteria: Percival as a fallen imperial monument in *The Waves*; Mussolini encased in steel as a Fascist idol encrusted with military insignia, and the photographs of ceremonially attired figures of English authority in *Three Guineas*. Such examples illustrate aspects of Woolf's play with perspective, with satirical reversal, subversion and comic exaggeration, to expose the tension between men's vulnerability and the studiedly heroic posturing of certain kinds of masculine performance, and also to represent dominant masculinity as a hegemonic model of behaviour.

Versions of the English public school gentleman, as the prevailing standard for masculine performance within this hegemonic model, appear frequently in the novels, the standard often being revealed as a mask of social behaviour behind which male selves conceal failings and vulnerability. For example, in *Mrs Dalloway* the standard is used to appraise men in a graded assessment of lifetime achievement. Richard Dalloway falls short as his career and marriage falter; Peter Walsh refuses to conform and despises the servile obedience of the achieved exponent of the standard in Hugh Whitbread, the assiduous courtier of those in high places; while a large part of the tragedy of the déclassé Septimus Smith is in his failure to sustain his heroic approximation to the standard in his 'sublime' wartime experience. In *The Waves*, the standard is applied to faultlessly repressed emotional behaviour and more or less willing compliance to the formative inculcation and consecrating rituals of public school conditioning. Percival represents an unmatchable, monumental and brutal version of the ideal, while Louis, as a colonial, suffers anguish in failing to match the arcane public school requirements. Public school and Oxbridge standards of gentlemanly behaviour merge seamlessly with the hegemonic model of colonial/imperial masculinity. In *Percival* the model is satirized on a grand scale; while throughout the novels the gallery of satirized masculine stereotypes includes the

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<sup>28</sup> Examples abound in *Jacob's Room* of Jacob being viewed by female observers in Olympia and on the Acropolis in Athens – e.g. 'Sandra Williams got Jacob's head exactly on a level with the head of the Hermes of Praxiteles. The comparison was all in his favour' (200) (see Chapter 4).

superannuated 'Empire men' who visibly age through Woolf's oeuvre. The figure of the English military/imperial patriot appears as the still virile Richard Dalloway in *The Voyage Out* and the nearly played-out version of him in *Mrs Dalloway*; the greying, colonial Peter Walsh in *Mrs Dalloway*; the retired Col. Pargiter in *The Years* and the ancient Bart Oliver in *Between The Acts*.<sup>29</sup>

Woolf's masculine stereotypes are generally minor characters, such as the brutal medical men, Holmes and Bradshaw, who (fail to) tend to Septimus Smith in *Mrs Dalloway*.

Charles Tansley, Mr Ramsay's acolyte in *To The Lighthouse*, typifies single- and narrow-minded dedication to academic achievement, but is drawn with a certain sympathy in that he is seen, through the eyes of Mrs Ramsay, as struggling to overcome disadvantages of social class. Orlando's husband is a comic parody of the tireless, male adventurer/hero, whose physical feats of global exploration (rounding Cape Horn under sail) also parody Mr Ramsay's philosophical feats in *To The Lighthouse*. William Pepper in *The Voyage Out* also comically parodies male intellectual obsession combined, in his case, with arrested cultural socialization (Clarissa Dalloway classifies him as a 'semi-trained terrier').

Alongside this range of traditionally-moulded masculine figures, whose characterization is shaped by hegemonic norms, there are in the novels a few examples of 'new men' struggling to adapt to, embrace or construct new norms of gendered behaviour conditioned by relative change in the status of women and the slow eclipse of traditional hegemonic masculine norms. More or less sympathetic and rounded representations of politically and/or psychologically aware men, such characters are caught in the throes of mental, moral, political and/or emotional struggle and turmoil. Among these can be included Ralph Denham (*ND*), Septimus Warren Smith (*MD*), Peter Walsh (*MD*), North Pargiter (*TY*). Versions of homosexual men are imprecisely located along a continuum from a secluded form of Oxbridge homosociality to relatively overt or closeted forms of homosexual identity; however, Woolf's representations of homosexual men tend to

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<sup>29</sup> Esty describes this progression in the sequence of novels as 'the gradual superannuation of the Empire men' (2004, 249).

appear as uncritical recipients of male privilege rather than as agents of change. The portrait of St John Hirst with his fierce satirical critique of priestly hypocrisy is perhaps an exception. Ralph Denham's characterization as a dynamic, self-making and decidedly heterosexual young man who combines energy and purpose with intellectual capacity and a radical disdain for class privilege contrasts him with the much more ambivalent characterization of Hewet and Hirst in *The Voyage Out*, who seem to have stepped straight out of an elite, homosocial, Cambridge/Apostolic world inflected by Bloomsbury. Virtually alone amongst Woolf's male characters, Denham exhibits hints of an almost Lawrentian (but well contained) masculine sexual allure, although it is his intellectual independence of mind which mainly, on the surface, seems to attract Katherine Hilbery. In the formal structure of the novel (*ND*), the intricacies of a complex courtship ritual serve to display disparate masculine qualities to her appraising gaze; Katherine's marital choice is made with much more certainty than Rachel's (*VO*), but also with a significant amount of cool evaluation of what she may gain or lose. Woolf's questioning, defamiliarising approach to traditional marriage plots in these two early novels locates male characters in a frame of expectation which requires them to rise out of the torpor of traditional masculine attitudes and to offer or create alternatives. Hewet fails; while Denham shows some promise of succeeding. Additionally there are fleeting glimpses in the novels of lower-middle or working class men, whose upbringing has had a socialist inflection, who could be seen as prefiguring a more progressive model of masculinity. Examples are the self-made working class academic Brook and his son in 'The Pargiters', and the socialist Frenchman Renny in *The Years*.

Also of note is the small category of men who are monsters -- inhabiting both 'real' and dream worlds -- darkly sinister, sexually threatening or emotionally intimidating: e.g. the predator lurking outside the Pargiter family house in *The Years* who terrifies, if not molests, the child Rose; the disgusting creatures who visit Rachel Vinrace in her dreams; and perhaps even the monster Bart Oliver makes of himself (his newspaper as a playful snout over his face) to terrify and test the manliness of the very young George in *Between*



the Acts. Mr Ramsay's sarcastic emotional bullying in the opening scene of *To The Lighthouse* might also qualify him for inclusion in the category. Such 'monster males' are related to bullies in the domestic household and dictators posturing on the world stage in *Three Guineas*.

There is also in some male characters a significant biographical dimension, a feature which impinges increasingly indirectly in Woolf's later work. Woolf acknowledged her ambivalent feelings about the men from the elite homosocial world of her brother Thoby's Cambridge friends, who became members (together with the Stephen sisters) of the nascent Bloomsbury circle's intellectual gatherings and discussions. Among them were men who to some extent liberated themselves from certain constraints of Victorian masculinity and attitudes towards gender and sexuality, but retained male prerogatives relating to their own intellectual and public status ('the patriarchal dividend').<sup>30</sup> This ambivalence seems evident in the characterization of Hewet and Hirst in *The Voyage Out*, and in the attempt to go beyond the narrow class base of these young men's intellectual privilege in the characterization of Ralph Denham, who combines energy and purpose with intellectual capacity and disdain for class privilege.

Collectively, it could be said, Woolf's male characters depict (as if they all had minor parts to play in a vast canvas in the manner of Breughel) the historical demise of a specific model of hegemonic masculinity, under whose influence they each construct lives (as shown in the novels) more or less in conformity and/or resistance to the hegemonic model. The model is that of an (almost exclusively) English version (the predominant type) of British imperial masculinity which sets up as its criterion for emulation and achievable performance, the standards of the English gentleman of the public school type. Across Woolf's novels a certain periodisation marking the progress of this demise of hegemony is evident. The periods reflect the impact of three major historical events: above all the First World War and its consequences; the long process of Britain's imperial

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<sup>30</sup> Connell, R. W. 1995. *Masculinities*, 79. The marriage plot in *Night and Day* is often interpreted as a retrospective assessment of the author's own marriage choice (e.g. Wilson, J. M. 1996).

decline and the growth of movements of colonial and national resistance; and the political gains made in women's enfranchisement and emancipation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The periodisation also reflects Woolf's own development as a professional woman writer, her intense interest in time, process and history, the evolution of her methods and formal experimentation, and her emergence as a public intellectual. Male characters in the early novels to a large extent reflect the relatively conventional form and content of Woolf's two early novels, although they carry a large share of the satirical twist which subverts conventional plot lines of *Bildungsroman* and patriarchal marriage plot. In the period of Woolf's 'war trilogy' of the 1920s, the disappearance of a Hellenised ideal of Edwardian masculinity symbolised by the petrification of Jacob as a Greek statue coincides with the failure of the déclassé Septimus Smith to fulfil his promise as a war hero. In *The Waves* the transformation of Percival into a fallen imperial monument marks the passing of an outdated model of hegemonic masculinity, subsumed by the First World War, imperial decline and advances made by the women's movement.

The final period (TY, TG, BA) takes male characterization, already 'deconstructively' demonstrated in *The Waves* to be created through a fictional representation of formative conditioning and the gradual acquisition of gendered *habitus*, into the new territory of the family chronicle of *The Years* and the debate in *Three Guineas* and *Between the Acts* about masculinity, violence and war. These two late texts, products of an already 'post-imperial' moment in the shadow of the Second World War, hint at the potential emergence of a militarised, fascistic masculine hegemony in this period. Woolf's constructions of masculinity in the male characters, types and stereotypes who inhabit her novels in changing times suggest both pessimistic realism, on her part, about the imminent likelihood of transformed patterns of behaviour, and a certain guarded optimism in the potentiality of men who, because of their class, nationality or sexuality, do not conform to outmoded patterns of English gentlemanly behaviour.

The chapters in this study are sequenced to reflect, on the one hand, thematic development in the subject matter of Woolf's fiction, especially the links, which she made ever more explicit, between masculinity, war and the rise of Fascism; and on the other, the development of her autoethnographical methods for representing the public world of men. Chapter Two focuses on *Three Guineas* as Woolf's most radical statement about masculinity and war, and the most explicit account of her construction of masculinity, based on preferential privilege accorded to male kin and on male propensity to exert authority and aggressive dictatorship both in the domestic sphere and on the public, global stage of international conflict. The controversial reception history of this text, and the author's fluctuating reputation, are sketched in through a close analysis of editions published in the last two decades of the twentieth century and in the first decade of the twenty-first. Chapter Three focuses upon the domestic sphere, specifically the family dynamics within the three households depicted in *Night and Day*, *To The Lighthouse* and *The Years*. Significant development in method and psycho-social analysis is evident across these texts; comparison in terms of mode and scope of analysis is also made with influential contemporaneous texts (Olive Schreiner, Edward Aveling and Eleanor Marx, Friedrich Engels). Chapter Four examines processes of *Bildung*, education and masculine formation in relation to Woolf's construction of masculine identity in *Jacob's Room* and *The Waves*. Correspondence is demonstrated between Bourdieu's critique of conventional scholarship in *Homo Academicus* (1984) and Woolf's satirical treatment of homosociality, male scholarship and ideological inculcation in English public schools and at Oxbridge. A detailed analysis is undertaken of masculine identity formation in *The Waves*, again showing correspondences between Bourdieu's sociological analysis and Woolf's fictional representation. Chapter Five reads Woolf's first novel, *The Voyage Out*, as an early foray into the genre of travel writing and the use of tropes of ethnography and anthropological distancing. The subverted *Bildung* of Rachel Vinrace presages Woolf's satirical appropriation of novelistic conventions and the critique of gendered roles and social conventions in later work. The imperial setting of the novel sets the scene for an examination in Chapter Six of the themes of Empire and war in *Mrs Dalloway* and *To The*

*Lighthouse*. These themes are present throughout Woolf's oeuvre, but shadow these novels in particular ways: the former conflating the uneasy London postwar atmosphere with the post-traumatic condition of shell-shock; the latter deploying Freud's psychoanalytical framework in a domestic drama of oedipal intergenerational struggle preceding and postdating the catastrophe of the First World War. Chapter Seven concludes the study with a reading of Woolf's last novel, *Between the Acts*, as a sophisticated demonstration of autoethnographic method developed out of the historical and cultural analysis in *Three Guineas* and its critique of Fascism and masculinist warring instincts. The final chapter also seeks to update and balance Woolf's evolving literary reputation with an account of her steadily emerging reputation as a public intellectual.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Virginia Woolf's construction of masculinity in *Three Guineas*

#### 1) Introduction

*Three Guineas* (1938), Virginia Woolf's most explicit statement of her political, feminist and pacifist convictions, has also been considered by some critics to be her most misunderstood work. This chapter focuses on the most recent stage of this text's complex reception history and discusses how recent scholarship has produced new critical readings and opened up potentially rich avenues for research into Woolf's methods as a social and cultural commentator. In particular, the chapter shows how an analysis of Woolf's methods, rhetorical strategies and authorial self-positioning in this text provides a means to discuss a relatively unexplored aspect of her work: the ways in which she constructs masculinity, portrays male characters, and represents men and women in relations of gender and power, not only in this text, but also in her fiction and other writing. The first section of the chapter examines in some detail six British and American editions of *Three Guineas* which were published with editors' introductions between 1984 and 2006, a period during which there was significant critical reappraisal of this text. The second section discusses the value of autoethnography as a conceptual framework for understanding Woolf's approach to a study of masculinity and the public world of men from an outsider's perspective. The third section concludes the chapter by focusing on questions of authority: the ways in which Woolf establishes her position and right to speak in this text – as cultural critic, as an excluded female citizen and as a professional writer and engaged correspondent – by both calling upon and interrogating the authority of religious and classical texts: St Paul's *Epistles* and Sophocles's *Antigone*.

The reputation of this highly controversial late work has fluctuated widely. As a serious but also partly satirical investigation into the causes of war and of masculine domination in both the public and private spheres of British society in the 1930s, and undertaken at a polarised moment in world political history, *Three Guineas* has either been regarded as

controversial or has been ignored. Exciting both hostility and approval when first published, it lapsed into obscurity in the post-war period until interest in it was revived during the second wave of the feminist movement in the 1970s. It was taken up as a key text of feminism on both sides of the Atlantic, and its subsequent interpretation and reception were much influenced by debates and shifting perspectives within feminism and also by theoretical interpretations of women's writing in the US, France and the UK. In the last two decades of the twentieth century, significant textual scholarship on Woolf's reading notebooks and early drafts of her works (especially Silver's *Virginia Woolf's Reading Notebooks*, 1983), as well as the appearance of new scholarly editions of *Three Guineas* (e.g. Black's 2001 edition), have contributed to revaluation of the relationship between Woolf's fiction and non-fictional writing. Against this background, and persistent claims that the text was 'misunderstood' (Black 2001, Laura Marcus 2004, Froula 2005), 'unwelcomed' (Sontag 2004), or even contained an 'irreceivable' message when originally published (Poole 1991), it continues to be periodically hailed as a text which 'has found its time' (Barrett 1996, Marcus 2006).

Research into the lengthy process of composition of *Three Guineas* and scholarly analysis of its complex structure have opened new dimensions for its interpretation. Thus readings which see this late text as a satire on male scholarship indicate the potential for further research into Woolf's methods and textual strategies. For example, devices such as the interplay of real and imagined photographs and the elaborate apparatus of end-notes can be seen not only as subversive appropriation of scholarly conventions and academic procedures but as part of a continuing critical exposure of habituated forms of thinking which Woolf identified as specifically masculine in both form and content. Her critique of the 'masculine point of view' – of a masculine mentality which is both historically specific and which also claims trans-historical universality -- was a lifelong process intimately connected to the ceaseless formal experimentation which impelled her to depart from and re-make for her own purposes generic conventions of the novel, the essay or -- as in *Three Guineas* -- of the epistolary mode. As a result of recent scholarly research into

Woolf's methods of research and composition, the occasion is ripe for analysis and renewed interpretation of her methods for representing relations of gender and power, and specifically of the fading of a specific type of hegemonic masculinity, across her work as a whole.

## **2) Six editions of *Three Guineas* (1984 - 2006)<sup>1</sup>**

Six editions, published between 1984 and 2006, have been selected for discussion here because each is framed and informed by an editorial apparatus and introduction published during a period of significant critical attention to *Three Guineas* and its relationship to Woolf's other work. The juxtaposition of text and editor's introduction in such editions creates a particular kind of critical stance -- assumptions are made about the intended readership in terms of how an edition is editorially framed and marketed; readers' responses are shaped and informed by this and by accounts of the text's reception hitherto; and claims are made about the text's contemporary relevance. A comparison of the different approaches to framing these editions and the inferences made by the editors is thus an effective way of summarising aspects of the reception history of *Three Guineas* and discussing how literary critical and ideological debates produced new readings of the text towards the end of the twentieth and at the beginning of the twenty-first centuries.

My analysis of these editions brings into focus features of the text which underpinned critical controversies in interpreting Woolf's methods and generated what recent editors perceive as 'misunderstandings' of her textual strategies and political tactics. Although

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<sup>1</sup> The editions are as follows:

1. *A Room Of One's Own & Three Guineas*, edited by Hermione Lee. London: Chatto & Windus/The Hogarth Press, 1984.
2. *Three Guineas*, edited by Hermione Lee, Hogarth Critics. London: The Hogarth Press, 1986
3. *A Room Of One's Own & Three Guineas*, edited by Morag Shiach. Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 1992.
4. *A Room Of One's Own & Three Guineas*, edited by Michèle Barrett. London: Penguin, 1993, reprinted in Penguin Classics, 2000.
5. *Three Guineas*, edited by Naomi Black. Oxford: Shakespeare Head, Blackwell, 2001.
6. *Three Guineas*, edited by Jane Marcus. Orlando, Florida: Harcourt Inc., 2006.

the differences between these editions are of bibliographical interest, this commentary does not aim to produce a book history but to focus on the circulation of readings and ideas about *Three Guineas* from the 1970s and 1980s onwards, prior to an analysis of the text as a statement in which Woolf most explicitly outlines a construction of masculinity. Plotting these differences against an account of new readings, actuated by changing theoretical perspectives and new scholarship, offers a potentially fruitful way of approaching my theme. In similar vein Laura Marcus suggests that it would be an interesting exercise to plot changing appraisals of different characters in the novels (Mrs Ramsay, Lily Briscoe or Clarissa Dalloway) in the light of evolving critical perspectives over recent decades (Laura Marcus 2000, 227).

The reception of *Three Guineas* and its current re-evaluation have been influenced by many factors, but chiefly by three: Woolf's highly controversial, and apparently much misunderstood strategy of linking feminist and pacifist perspectives in analysing patriarchal structures; the relatively slow engagement with Woolf's own politics and feminism, and with her negotiations over the place, function and relative weight of art and politics in her writing; and the manner in which Woolf, as author of texts and as subject of biographies, has been appropriated by contending sides in 'custody battles' over her literary estate and reputation.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the insights gained by recent scholarship, particularly in the US by Brenda Silver (1983) into Woolf's processes of research, composition and revision in relation to her major writing project of the 1930s, have contributed significantly to understanding and appreciation of the form and content of *Three Guineas*. Furthermore there are important differences of emphasis between British and North American scholarship on Woolf, especially in relation to how Woolf's class position and attitudes are understood and how her politics and feminism are appraised. North American accounts have tended to be less concerned about class issues and also less critical of what are seen in Britain as lapses or failings in her political and feminist commitments. In general over the period under consideration here, there has been a

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<sup>2</sup> Jane Marcus 1988, 117.



tendency towards a scholarly mid-Atlantic synthesis and consensus, although differences remain.

The earlier editions in the period (Lee 1984, Shiach 1992, Barrett 1993) are joint publications of both *A Room of One's Own* (1929), and *Three Guineas* (1938), reflecting a perceived need to introduce readers to a fuller range of Woolf's political writing at a time when little was known about Woolf's politics. *A Room of One's Own* had been well received since its publication, was already popular and considered a classic; while *Three Guineas* had been largely ignored following the furore surrounding its first appearance, but had recently attracted interest and acquired status as a key text of second wave feminism. The publication of Hermione Lee's 1986 paperback 'Hogarth Critics' edition of *Three Guineas*, closely following the 1984 hardback joint edition, clearly targeted at a student readership, can be seen as acknowledgement of the fact that the text is worthy of renewed critical attention and a new cheaper separate edition.<sup>3</sup> However, another fifteen years were to elapse before a full scholarly separate hardback edition (Black, Shakespeare Head: 2001) appeared. This landmark edition was itself followed five years later by Jane Marcus's paperback (2006) edition of the text framed by a distinctively feminist editorial apparatus which seeks to engage a new generation of (mainly North American) readers, and whose editorial approach is informed and shaped both by recent scholarship and by Marcus's unique scholarly and activist perspective in having championed this text since 1974.<sup>4</sup> Thus these editions both comment on and have themselves to some extent influenced the text's recent reception.

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<sup>3</sup> The front cover of this paperback edition (1986) has a cartoon style drawing of a gowned and bewigged barrister in the foreground engaged in debate with a plainly attired young woman, diminutive in a witness box in the background, three gold guineas in her hand: the epistolary exchange of *Three Guineas* rendered as courtroom drama at a time when second wave feminism was in the ascendant. The back cover indicates intended readership: 'Feminism/Social/Political Criticism' categorises the text within the Hogarth Critics series; a blurb reads: '*Three Guineas* ranks as one of this century's most illustrious feminist and pacifist pleas, by a writer of worldwide renown and distinction. She fires an extremely well-aimed opening shot in a battle that still rages today'.

<sup>4</sup> Marcus dates the revival of critical interest in Woolf's politics and feminism to the publication in 1976 of her own paper, "'No More Horses": Virginia Woolf on Art and Propaganda', given at a MLA Convention in 1974. 'Horses' refers to Woolf's discussion in *Three Guineas* of the destructive effect of propaganda on the art of writing: producing mules rather than horses.

### 3) *A Room of One's Own* to *Three Guineas*: continuity or difference?

Editors of the joint editions of *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas* comment on differences and consistencies between Woolf's two main polemical works and discuss her politics accordingly. Lee (1984) sees an intimate connection and continuity between the arguments of each, both having a clear materialist perspective on the power of money to determine social position, and each focusing on education and women's exclusion -- *A Room of One's Own* in the context of writing, and *Three Guineas* in the context of war. Shiach (1992) emphasises the theoretical aspects of both texts and the strength of Woolf's political, cultural and historical analysis: the 'accessible' *A Room of One's Own* is the 'first sustained essay in feminist literary theory'; while *Three Guineas*, a 'still relatively unknown and marginalised text', contains a 'much broader analysis of the political and cultural implications of women's oppression' (xii). Reversing the conventional contrast between the texts (*A Room of One's Own* as elegant and playful as against the explicit anger and polemic of *Three Guineas*), Shiach suggests that Woolf's avoidance of anger in *A Room of One's Own* 'functions uneasily in a text which has represented so clearly the historical causes of that anger' (xvii). She counters dismissive comments about *Three Guineas* by feminist critics: 'empty sloganeering and cliché' (Showalter 1977); 'stridency' (Heilbrun 1973), by arguing that 'in fact' the text is the product of ten years of research within and into a period which saw Hitler's rise to power in 1933, the Spanish Civil War 1936-39, and the polarisation of British society 'in an atmosphere of economic recession and massive unemployment' (xiii). Woolf is presented by Shiach as an active and engaged commentator on her times, 'forced' to analyse 'the political implications of the patriarchal structure she had identified throughout both public and private institutions', and clearly identifying 'the social forces that have led to the growth of Fascism' (xiii).

Barrett's substantial introduction (1993) makes a powerful case for joint publication of the two texts in order to demonstrate the development of Woolf's ideas on political and gender issues between the 1920s and 1930s, and the significant light that these two 'polemical

broadsides' throw on her fiction (and *vice versa*) (ix). Barrett evaluates Woolf's politics and the consistency of her feminism from a political vantage point in the early 1990s. In positively acknowledging Woolf's 'prescience' in identifying gender issues in the 1930s which still 'speak to contemporary debates in feminism', she discusses the development in Woolf's political thinking and identifies a 'distinctive break' between the position of 'gender neutrality' adopted in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and a 'new, no nonsense' and much more radical stance' in *Three Guineas* (1938) (xxv). For Barrett, the 'ideal of upholding androgyny in art' in *A Room of One's Own* (xvii) aligns Woolf with the 'equality' position in the equality/difference dichotomy of feminist debates; while the emphasis in *Three Guineas* on difference and a socially structured gender division, together with the explicit argument about aggressive and militaristic masculine tendencies, aligns her with a more radical wing of contemporary feminism. At the same time, Barrett takes a tough and critical (but still somewhat a-historical) stance in her appraisal of the politics of *Three Guineas*, identifying an 'incipient tension' (xlili) in the text produced by Woolf's 'vexing' ambivalence towards radical feminist politics. Barrett acknowledges how increasingly sharp differences on the issue of pacifism in this period, both in national debate and within the Bloomsbury circle (where the issue was complicated by the tragedy of Julian Bell's death in Spain in 1937), must have contributed to Woolf's ambivalence, but she is ultimately condemnatory of what she sees as Woolf's 'abdication of political agency' - a failing for which she relegates her to 'the "feminist soft left" of those days' (xxxvii).

Barrett's approval of the 'prescience' of Woolf's feminism does not extend so far as to sanction the class position and perspective which she adopts as 'daughter of an educated man'. To prioritise the specific needs of middle-class women over the more general (socialist) desirability of abolishing capitalism is politically unacceptable for this editor. Neither is she convinced by the politics of the Outsiders' Society, seeing Woolf's construction of women as outsiders as allowing her 'to exempt women from full participation in difficult decisions' (xli). Despite her reservations about Woolf's political and feminist position, Barrett's conviction that *Three Guineas* is a text which has 'now

found its time' (ix) is based on the strength of the central arguments made 'in the style of a much later feminism' (xviii): that women's financial independence is an essential precondition for equality; and that the public and private spheres are inseparably connected because women opposing the patriarchal state and men opposing the Fascist state confront the same enemy. She welcomes Woolf's 'partial recognition' of women's identity as a social construction ('destabilising of the category woman', xxi), but finds her recourse to 'vague notions of freedom of mind and expression' (xxi) and her concept of subjectivity to be problematic limitations which prevent her from driving her argument through to the logical conclusion that women must build a new identity rather than 'discover' one. Notwithstanding her critique of Woolf's politics, Barrett concludes her analysis by announcing that the 'traditional' view of Woolf as an elitist aesthete has been decisively replaced by feminist interpretations of her anti-patriarchal stance and her commitment to a range of radical ideas and politics (xlv).

#### **4) Questions of genre and politics: fact, fiction and polemic in *Three Guineas***

The difficulty in categorising *Three Guineas* in terms of genre is complicated by still unresolved questions about the nature and radicalism of Woolf's feminism, and also by the complex form and the often confusing and unconventional structure of its argument. Political questions and textual difficulties such as these have undoubtedly contributed to the extent to which *Three Guineas* has been 'misunderstood', rejected or ignored both as a text and as a political intervention. Editors adopting perspectives from within British feminism of the 1980s and 1990s (Lee, Shiach, Barrett) are all, to varying degrees, critical of Woolf's mode of argument and of her political position in *Three Guineas*. In evaluating Woolf's tactics, Lee implies that it is the weaknesses in her argument and the uncertainty of her political stance which laid her open to attack, while, for Shiach, it is the radicalism of Woolf's conclusions (and some over-simplification in her argument) which provoked hostile responses. These editors acknowledge the importance of Silver's work (1983) on Woolf's use of sources and methods of research for understanding the form and content

of *Three Guineas* and the scope of Woolf's ambitious writing project of the 1930s. The hybrid nature of the text is seen as emerging out of the long process of experimentation and crossing genre boundaries of fact and fiction, which engaged and then burdened Woolf during this period, as she disassembled the discursive (and unfinished) 'novel-essay' *The Pargiters* and remade it into *The Years* (1937) and *Three Guineas*. While Lee, for example, agrees with Silver's assessment that Woolf's research and writing in this period distinguishes her as an important cultural critic -- 'the systematic reader of her culture' (in Silver's phrase) -- she identifies structural problems in Woolf's argument which detract from its effectiveness as an analytical work. She notes that *Three Guineas* was 'belatedly' (in the mid-1980s) becoming 'an exemplary text for feminists, enthusiastically received into the orthodoxy as "Marxist", "revolutionary", and "subversive"' (xix). However, largely because of Woolf's tendency to intersperse practical proposals (e.g. wages for housework) with visionary flights, Lee describes it as 'a Utopian meditation' rather than as a political manifesto.

While Shiach and Barrett evaluate *Three Guineas*'s analysis mostly in terms of its relevance to feminist debates in the 1990s, Lee assesses its immediate impact on publication and the effects of this on its subsequent reception. Its publication in 1938 excited hostile judgements both from Woolf's immediate circle: 'silly' (Keynes);<sup>5</sup> 'odd' (Quentin Bell); 'muddled' (Nigel Nicolson); and from outside it: 'self-indulgent [...] preposterous [...] ill-informed [...] irresponsible' (Q. D. Leavis) (xviii). Lee comments that Nicolson established what was to become a standard response of 'condescending resistance [to the arguments] expressed in the form of anxiety about the author's coherence and mental stability' (xix). Nicolson's reference to Woolf's mental state as detracting from the 'coherence' of her argument, together with comments in similar vein by Quentin Bell and others, and certain editorial decisions by Leonard Woolf, fuelled controversy about Woolf's political and literary legacy over many decades, and into the

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<sup>5</sup> Frank Kermode identifies 'silliness' as 'a Bloomsbury expression', used in the 'old sense' to mean something like 'simple' or 'saintly'. As well as in Virginia Woolf, there was said to be 'a streak of the 'silly' in [G E] Moore and E M Forster (2009, 122).

present. In evaluating the status of the text forty years later, a consistent strand of discussion is a concern with the success or otherwise of Woolf's political tactics and rhetorical strategies in entering the world of public debate: how successfully her case is made; how anticipated hostile responses are deflected, and how she positions herself in the domain of public debates as a relatively powerless woman. In a passage in her first novel, *The Voyage Out* (1915), Woolf appears already to have considered the dangers of moving off her 'own lines' (as poet and artist) to confront masculine political certitude directly. The politician, Richard Dalloway, debating the relative social usefulness of artists and politicians, asserts his confidence in his own professional prowess - '[W]hat I feel about poets and artists in general is this: on your own lines, you can't be beaten -- granted; but off your own lines -- puff -- one has to make allowances. Now, I shouldn't like to think that any one had to make allowances for me' (36).

What kind of 'allowances' are made in interpretations of *Three Guineas* (a text which Woolf considered as containing her definitive views)<sup>6</sup> for the fact that she, as both artist and woman, had the temerity to enter public debate? How successfully does she take on professional men, the object of her attack, 'on their own lines'? In the judgement of the five editors considered here, the British editors are somewhat equivocal about Woolf's success, while American feminist scholarship (represented by Black and Marcus) reify Woolf's reputation as a pioneering feminist writer by disdainfully dismissing her critics and asserting in a distinctly partisan manner that her feminism was radical and consistent. Even so, Jane Marcus concedes that her overall strategy in *Three Guineas* 'does not quite come off' (p. xlii). Discussion of these questions gives rise to more detailed consideration of how Woolf positions herself as author, and the strategies of indirection she uses to avoid the negative consequences of direct attack. Lee points to 'a complex process of self-concealment', partly involving the re-working of the discursive essay sections, or 'inter-chapters', of *The Pargiters*. Some of this excised material is 'brought to light and air' in *Three Guineas*, whereas at the same time, 'a kind of burying is still going on' (xvii). For

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<sup>6</sup> Letter to Vita Sackville-West, 19 June 1938, *Letters*, VI, 235.

example, the startling comparison made between St Paul and the Nazis -- the equation of priests and dictators -- is 'buried' in the complexity of the text. Shiach finds Woolf apparently 'unsettled' by the 'enormity of her discoveries' (xvii), and like Lee, notes how, in negotiating this difficult territory, Woolf has throughout 'expressed the complexity of her argument and her hesitancy by use of ellipses' (xxvii).

Later interpretations by Black and Jane Marcus serve to deepen understanding of the indirectness of Woolf's methods by focusing more closely on Woolf's satirical mode in *Three Guineas*, and on her rhetorical strategies, for example Black suggests that the fiction of the letters acts as camouflage for the attacks which she mounts. Although Lee in 1986 makes a passing reference to both *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas* as 'satires on male society from a woman's point of view' (vii), she does not develop this point into a discussion of this significant aspect of genre. At this relatively early stage in the reappraisal of Woolf as a political writer, it is perhaps understandable that questions about her seriousness as a political commentator and the extent of her commitment as a feminist are fore-grounded in the editorial commentaries of the 1980s and 90s, while her satirical intent receives little attention. Perhaps one of the shortcomings of Barrett's analysis (together with her rather a-historical perspective on Woolf's feminism) is that her closely argued account of Virginia Woolf's politics is done with a single-minded seriousness which pays scant attention to the evidently satirical aspects of her stance in *Three Guineas*.<sup>7</sup> However, by 2001 this imbalance is redressed by Black's editorial commentary, which presents an important new interpretation of Woolf's satirical purposes.

##### **5) North American perspectives on Woolf's feminism**

Black (2001) states her aim as being threefold: to clarify the confusion and controversy surrounding the reception history of 'the most misunderstood' of Woolf's works by

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<sup>7</sup> This despite Brenda Silver's valuable reference (1982, p.3) to Woolf's diary entry (D. III, June 27, 1925), confirming Swift as one of her great models - 'I'm replenishing my cistern at night with Swift'.

elucidating the intricate structure and argument, and the lengthy dual history of its composition; to demonstrate that the 'truly radical feminism' of *Three Guineas* is consistent with Woolf's feminism elsewhere in her writing and in her political activity; and to argue that the form of the text amounts to 'feminist manipulation' of the conventions of male scholarship (xiii). Interpreting Woolf's experimentation with literary and polemical form as part of a satirical strategy opens up a new perspective on Woolf's methods, while Black's documented argument about the consistent and radical nature of Woolf's feminism seeks to allay doubts (such as those suggested by Barrett) about Woolf's political commitment.<sup>8</sup>

Black's unpicking of the text's intricate structure reveals an elaborate interplay of letters and draft responses to letters. Establishing from the outset that the work can neither be described as a novel nor as non-fiction, clear elucidation of the epistolary form and the use of a fictional first person narrator ('correspondent-narrator', xviii) reveals a sequence of twelve overlapping letters, or drafts of letters – five of them presented as letters the author has received, and seven as letters, or draft letters, that she writes. The first letter serves as a framing letter for the whole text. The 'dual history' of composition refers to two processes: firstly the actual history of composition, with its origins in Woolf's 1931 speech (published in essay form as 'Professions for Women') and the lengthy work which went into *The Years* and eventually into *Three Guineas*; and secondly, 'a longer pattern of development' (xix) through the 1920s and 1930s – a period of gestation and clarification of Woolf's feminist and pacifist ideas, as the elements of her argument gradually cohered. The longer period starts with the 1921 essay, 'A Society', includes *A Room of One's Own* (1929), and the Introduction (in letter form) to Margaret Llewelyn Davies's *Life as we have known it* (1931), which Black suggests forms 'a feminist bridge' between *A Room of One's*

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<sup>8</sup> Alison Light, in her review of Black's edition, considers that Black overstates her case in arguing for Woolf's position as being one of consistent and radical commitment to feminist politics, and that she selectively highlights certain diary entries while omitting others. Suggesting that Black's edition 'gives us an American Woolf, long known to be different from the native variety', Light notes yet another transatlantic swing of the critical pendulum: 'Black thinks it 'odd' that the British, including the editors of the Penguin and Oxford World's Classics editions of *Three Guineas*, take issue with Woolf and highlight her ambivalences. But it's equally odd that a scholarly teaching edition should see its role as celebratory, preaching only to the converted' ('Harnessed to a Shark', *London Review of Books*, Vol. 24, No. 6, 21 March 2002).



*Own and Three Guineas* (xxxvii). Woolf's diaries reveal the numerous working titles (at least a dozen plus variants) used during the process of composition: one group of titles refers to the symbolic opportunity represented by a door - 'The Open Door', 'A Knock on the Door' or 'Tap on the Door'; some are versions of 'On Being Despised'; another group summons up a community of correspondents with the title 'Answers to Correspondents' (xxvi).

Black has closely researched the development of Woolf's feminist position, using documentary evidence to establish links between her political activities and developing ideas, suggesting for example that Woolf's involvement with the Women's Cooperative Guild<sup>9</sup> foreshadows her 'Society of Outsiders' (xxxv). This assessment of Woolf's political engagement is very different to Michèle Barrett's. Black refers to Barrett's reading in neutral terms, although she does so within a section documenting judgements (including those influenced by communist-directed resistance to fascism, and of socialists like the Leavises, and 'Quentin Bell himself'), which were hostile to the feminist message of *Three Guineas*, and she expresses mild surprise that 'even among second-wave feminists, as late as the end of the twentieth century', critics of socialist orientation, such as Barrett, 'had trouble with Woolf's insistence that class analysis was inadequate for understanding the situation of women like herself' (l). Black's editorial approach and the evidence cited are presented as a corrective to the kinds of critical judgements which pay insufficient attention to historical context, and which, from an a-historical perspective, find 'Woolf's vision in *Three Guineas* incomplete' (xlv). Black argues that the views presented amount to a 'truly radical feminism', which informs a historical analysis of fascist militarism and its theoretical links to a patriarchal social structure. Its subject is peace and not war: Woolf's critique focuses on the psychological deformations and physical harm that are done by hierarchical structures to both women and men.

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<sup>9</sup> The Cooperative Movement (based upon consumers organised in retail Cooperative Societies) began in 1844 and the Women's Cooperative Guild (WCG) was founded in 1883. The Woolfs went to the WCG annual conference in 1913; in her 'Introductory Letter' to *Life As We Have Known It* ('Memories of a Working Women's Guild') Woolf describes her attendance at a Guild conference (Hussey 1995, 368).

The final part of Black's analytical commentary deals with Woolf's satirical strategy of parodic demonstration of the methods and conventions of scholarly research, which are identified as masculine in form, style and intent. She closely analyses the form and structure of argument, the procedures for amassing and citing evidence, the presentation and rhetorical devices used in debating the very wide range of issues raised, and striking features such as the elaborate end-notes and the satirical use of photographs.<sup>10</sup> The notes function as references and elaboration for points made in the text, but some appear almost as separate texts – short essays – in their own right. Black's editorial decision is to treat the end-notes (which in length represent one fifth of the book) as an intrinsic part of the whole text, and she points out that satirical use of academic method is also evident in Woolf's ironic play with research methodology in 'A Society' (1921), in *Orlando* (1928), *Flush* (1933), and in *A Room of One's Own* (her researches in the British Museum). As Black suggests, she moves from these earlier forays into 'direct attack' in *Three Guineas*.

Nearly two decades before her recent work of editing *Three Guineas* (2006) using an explicitly feminist editorial approach and apparatus, Jane Marcus had written in *Art and Anger* (1988) of the project in which scholars (mostly feminist and North American) were engaged, of recuperating Woolf from 'the ignominy of elitism' and the stigma of madness. She likens the attempt to 'change the subject in Woolf Studies from studies of madness and suicide to a concentration on her pacifism, feminism and socialism' to a literary version of the 'E P Thompson school of social history', in which without benefit of emerging literary theory (Barthes and Iser), a new 'sociology of literary criticism' (xiii), with 'lupine critics' (xvi) as its mentors, succeeded in accomplishing their aim of getting readers to pay attention to Woolf's politics. Marcus acknowledges certain excesses – e.g. the creation of a 'Woolf cult' (xv) -- but the measure of success is that by 1988 *A Room of One's Own* was 'being read in classrooms all over the country'. However, the historical disarticulation between developments in literary theory and critical readings of Woolf also

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<sup>10</sup> Woolf deliberately placed the notes at the end, because they contain the 'meatiest' parts of her argument, and she hoped that readers might read them separately. Letter to Ethel Smyth, 7 June 1938, *Letters VI*, 235.

caused critical opportunities to be missed. In Marcus's view, the potential development of 'a specifically *socialist* feminist criticism' in Woolf Studies was 'the road not taken' (xvii), due to the turn made in the 1970s and 1980s towards French and psychoanalytical models for new interpretations of Woolf's writing. Marcus's 2006 edition of *Three Guineas* can be seen as part of her venture down that road, editorially equipped with her own analysis of Woolf's consistent radicalism and with the fruits of more recent scholarship into the sources, composition and complex form of the text. In 1988 she suggested that Woolf was more radical in her political works than in her novels in terms of technical innovations and manipulation of form and content: that she broke the mould of the essay and the polemical pamphlet; that she took Milton's *Areopagitica* and Swift's *Modest Proposal* as her models in her extraordinary use of form and satiric mode; and that her choice of the epistolary mode was a deliberate strategy -- 'her stance as Daughter of an Educated Man responding by letter to requests for donations to good causes is itself a radical reflection of women's powerlessness' (110). In 2006 she takes this analysis further.

As editor of a new American paperback edition of *Three Guineas*, equipped with an extensive and feminist-oriented editorial apparatus, Marcus presents herself as a veteran feminist scholar and activist both in the field of Woolf studies and in key feminist debates since the 1970s. She foregrounds Woolf's intellectual status: as a famous 'Modernist English novelist', a 'major European thinker' and an 'important European theorist of feminism, pacifism and socialism', whose 'last words as a public intellectual' are presented in this text (xxxv). Addressing a new generation of North American readers unfamiliar with the text's complicated critical reception and the special status she claims it (and *A Room of One's Own*) achieved as a key text -- even a 'Bible' of the second wave feminist movement on both sides of the Atlantic -- Marcus emphasises the significance of Woolf's political writing in anti-war struggle and feminist debate in the 1970s. She notes that 'misreadings of the text' were common in this period (xxxviii), with splits emerging even among feminist critics, particularly over Quentin Bell's biography, which 'emphasised Woolf's illnesses, constructing her as a madwoman and writing the life backward from her

suicide' (xxxix). Such interpretations destroyed for some the possibility of considering Woolf as 'a role model for a new feminism' (xxix). Turning to assessments of Woolf in Britain, Marcus comments that American critics have been less disturbed than British critics by class issues and the elitism attributed to Woolf and Bloomsbury by the Leavises. She refers here not just to Q. D. Leavis's hostile review of *Three Guineas*, but to a 'smear campaign' mounted by both Leavises, 'who set Woolf against D. H. Lawrence, the "true" working-class English writer'. The strong influence of Leavisite views in many university English departments meant that 'it took a bit longer for British critics to embrace the writer and interpret her writings for themselves' (xxxix).

For Marcus, *Three Guineas* is 'a Marxist economic analysis of women's oppression' (liii), whose sources -- biography, autobiography, letters, daily newspapers and other such 'unauthorized sources' -- reveal the "'truth" of women's experience'. She sees the complex epistolary form as addressing a 'discursive community' which potentially includes the reader ('That means you and me'); yet she acknowledges that the reader is often placed in difficulty -- difficulty in 'following the multiple voices of the speaker and assuming the multiple roles in which she casts us' (xlii),<sup>11</sup> and discomfort as 'eavesdroppers twisting our necks to hear what she says, [...] we are never sure we aren't being addressed as well, as part of the problem'. Marcus links such readerly problems in negotiating this text to Woolf's apparent intention of producing 'a parody of scholarly editing'. This is consistent with Black's reading, but Marcus goes further in suggesting that 'an alternative historical practice of citing the uncited is also introduced' (lvi). In foregrounding 'so-called unreliable sources', in deliberately unconventional use of quotation to reveal quoting simply as 'a way of producing authority', Marcus suggests that Woolf is 'making a conscious challenge to the patriarchal authority of "footnotes" and "texts"' (xlviii). However, in also suggesting that the text can be read interactively (in both postmodern and technological senses) Marcus evidently has confidence in the capacity of a new

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<sup>11</sup> This echoes Lee's assessment of the difficulties confronting readers. Lee suggests that anger is 'the very method of *Three Guineas*', a text which 'keeps tripping itself up, sticking in its own throat' (xviii).

generation of 'twenty-first century readers, who use the Internet and other technological media' to deal with this 'minefield', this 'interactive text', and involve themselves 'in both the reading and "writing" of the script' of Woolf's work; such readers 'should be at home with this book in a way that earlier readers were not' (xlvii). Marcus thus finds new ways to emphasise the continuing and renewed relevance of this 'very radical book'.

Analysis of the shifting editorial emphases in this sequence of editions of *Three Guineas* indicates how political and literary debates intersected with its reception in the late twentieth century, and how early twenty-first century readings have to some extent countered and clarified the earlier readings. As earlier feminist readings undertook the necessary preliminary work of putting the historical record straight by disentangling the distorting influence upon interpretations of *Three Guineas*, of hostile critics who wished to dismiss or ignore its provocative political import by conflating supposed political ineptitude with mental instability and/or genteel delusions<sup>12</sup>, it was inevitable that their scope for analysis of the full range of Woolf's methods as a political writer would be limited both by the relatively underdeveloped state of Woolf studies and by the demands of this revisionary task. Thus while Woolf's powers of political analysis were emphasised by British feminist critics of the 1980s and 90s, her strategies of indirection in the text were variously interpreted as evasion: as defensive self-concealment (Lee); hesitancy (expressed by her use of ellipses) and a feeling of being unsettled by the 'enormity of her discoveries' (Shiach); or as ambivalence and/or abdication of women's political agency (Barrett). Meanwhile as the implications of (mainly North American) scholarship into Woolf's processes of research for her major sociological/historical/fictional project of the 1930s were critically assimilated, and as a fuller appreciation of her powers as a political satirist began to emerge, so too a fuller understanding of the range and rhetorical effects of Woolf's strategies and methods became possible. Later readings of *Three Guineas* therefore began to reveal more of Woolf's acuity and skill in satirical attack, affording a more nuanced understanding of the repertoire of strategies and tactics she also deployed

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<sup>12</sup> Bell describes Woolf as 'oddly irrelevant' -- 'a distressed gentlewoman caught in a tempest and making little effort either to fight against it or to sail before it' (1976, Vol 2, 185).

in defensively manoeuvring, outflanking and deliberately confusing the enemy, while rallying the forces of opposition to unquestioned masculine authority. As Woolf wielded Pope's 'sacred sword' of satire in the cause of peace and emancipation from masculine domination and patriarchal belligerence, she also developed a methodology for observing and analysing, as if from afar and with the perspective of an outsider, the hierarchically segregated and gendered social and political order. The next section will undertake an analysis of these strategies.

#### **6) *Three Guineas* as autoethnography**

Against this background of the reception and transmission of *Three Guineas*, this section will make use of the concept of autoethnography, principally as explored in the work of Pratt and Buzard, as an analytical framework for examining Woolf's textual strategies in her controversial and much re-interpreted polemical and pacifist intervention of 1938, and also as a way of articulating her view of masculinity. Borrowed from recent debates in anthropology and serviceable for ideological investigations, an autoethnographic framework provides an adaptable set of tools for identifying and analysing the various rhetorical strategies and distancing devices which Woolf employs in the text to position herself in relation to her object of study: men and masculine power as manifested in the public and private spheres. These devices include her self-identification as an 'Educated Man's Daughter', the use of images and photographs, and the various methods she uses to adopt a stance of distance, a 'strategically alienated perspective' (Buzard 2005) in relation to her own society, as commentator, analyst, observer. These methods include the use of epistolary form, of tropes associated with travel writing, anthropological perspectives, and the satirical appropriation of scholarly methods and apparatus (use of sources and evidence, references and end notes, etc.). An autoethnographic reading of *Three Guineas* also throws light on ways in which Woolf derives authority as a cultural critic, and as a writer compelled by circumstances to intervene in public debate as a

'public intellectual',<sup>13</sup> by asserting her right to speak as a citizen, but one who, as a woman, is an outsider.

In *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992), Mary Louise Pratt studies the ideological significance of genres of travel and exploration writing which emerged during the historical period when European exploration accompanied, and sometimes preceded, colonial and imperial expansion. Selecting texts which have had a powerful formative influence in shaping Europe's conception of itself in relation to the rest of the world, she subjects them to analysis using a range of critical lenses and analytic tools. Pratt's investigation of 'meaning-making' in this period embeds a study in genre within a critique of ideology, and these tools and lenses serve to illuminate the texts in their historical context and against a pervasive ideology of cultural superiority and monolithic Eurocentrism born of imperial power and its rationale of the 'civilising' mission. Given their multi-dimensional scope, these critical perspectives have considerable potential for use in the analysis of similar kinds of texts in other contexts. 'Contact zones' designates the space of colonial encounters, usually characterised by 'conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict' (the term is borrowed from sociolinguistics where it applies to improvised 'contact languages', such as pidgin and creoles, which emerged mainly through trade encounters). 'Anti-conquest' refers to strategies of representation whereby 'European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony' (scientific and botanical classification is one such mode). The 'seeing man' is the male subject of European landscape discourse, the main protagonist of the travel/exploration genre, 'whose imperial eyes passively look out and possess'; while 'autoethnography' or 'autoethnographic expression' refer to 'instances where colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that engage with the colonizer's own terms' (6). For Pratt, auto-ethnographic texts are constructed by others in response to or in dialogue with Euro-centred, metropolitan representations, and they may involve partial collaboration with and appropriation of the idioms of the conqueror: 'If

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<sup>13</sup> Jane Marcus, 2006, xxxv.

ethnographic texts are the means by which Europeans represent themselves to their (usually subjugated) others, autoethnographic texts are those the others construct in response to or in dialogue with those metropolitan representations' (6).

Pratt's key auto-ethnographic text, Guaman Poma's *New Chronicle and Good Government and Justice* (dated Cuzco 1613), is a rebuttal and 'correction' of Spanish colonial versions of Inca history and is written in a mixture of both Spanish and Quecha in the form of a 1200 page letter to King Phillip III of Spain. The letter concludes with 'a mock interview in which Poma advises the King as to his responsibilities, and proposes a new form of government through the collaboration of Andean and Spanish elites' (4).

In a review of Pratt's book, James Clifford suggests that autoethnography - 'with its vision of traditions refashioned through cross-cultural contacts' - is the 'least developed of Pratt's analytic tools' (4). Even so, he considers that Pratt's demonstration of the analytic value of autoethnography indicates its potential to inform a much wider study in which, Clifford speculates that 'European travel accounts would no longer hold centre-stage, but would contest and interact with other discourses - oral and literate, subaltern and elite, indigenous and creole'.<sup>14</sup>

This potential has subsequently been further explored by James Buzard in an account of recent 'strenuous' debates in anthropology about outsider and insider perspectives in ethnography (2003), and in his own use of the concept of autoethnography to analyse nineteenth-century English novels (2005). In the earlier discussion Buzard suggests reasons why the concept, for all its apparent promise of being 'the perfect aegis under which every heretofore silenced group might enunciate, from its own location, and according to its own agenda, its vision of itself and the world', had only been developed in an 'uneven and under-theorized manner' (2003, 61). Too many recent practitioners of autoethnographic accounts have, in his view, fallen into pitfalls of 'essentialism' or 'identity

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<sup>14</sup> *Times Literary Supplement* 11/9/1992, 4.



politics', because of a persistent assumption that no rigorous explanation is required of 'how one acquires authoritative knowledge of "one's own culture"'. As a result, no equipment equivalent to the familiar metaphors and narratives traditionally employed by ethnographers to explain how they gain authoritative knowledge of a culture which is not their own, has been developed in the field of autoethnography. This lack is further complicated by the confusing ways in which the established metaphors of early to mid-twentieth-century ethnography have 'become quite mixed up' because they have been 'both criticised and used in conflicting ways in recent theory' (62). Buzard focuses on 'two trope-clusters' of 'voice' and 'place', which acquired 'colossal prestige' in the de-colonizing period of cultural pluralism in the later twentieth-century. He argues that the trope of 'voice' has not been adequately explored in these debates; while the cluster of metaphors around 'movement', 'travel' and 'place' were subjected to extensive (and sometimes obfuscating) scrutiny and discussion -- its key significance being summed up in the view that 'twentieth-century ethnography has depended on the metaphor of knowledge as travel'. Buzard concludes that in the wake of the 'decolonizing era of the later twentieth-century', when ethnography was critiqued as being 'implicated in the agendas of empire', there has been a marked increase both in the frequency and urgency of appeals to 'bring the ethnographic gaze back home' (76). The 'under-theorized' concept of autoethnography is thus ripe for development; and this could best be served by closer consideration of how 'the problem of voice ('speaking for' and 'speaking to') intersects with the problem of place ('speaking from' and 'speaking of')', and by a certain critical recuperation of the older metaphors and 'figurations of culture and ethnography' -- in a 'renewed and qualified appreciation' both of their advantages and disadvantages (80).

In his study of the autoethnographic work of nineteenth-century English novelists (2005), Buzard shows how novelists in this period deployed anthropological perspectives as they invented realist scenarios.<sup>15</sup> He points to the ideological significance, during a period of

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<sup>15</sup> Buzard notes in passing (2005, note 12, 39) how some anthropologists have conceived of their sociological task as additionally requiring the skills of a novelist - 'able to evoke the life of a whole

intensified European imperialist expansion, of the increasingly institutionalised authority of an evolutionary, comparativist anthropology with its certitudes and discourse about 'the supposedly fixed characteristics – moral, intellectual, and physical – of human races'; and moreover, of one that 'retained the ideologically useful idea of savagery, or a state of human society apparently so unconstrained by morality or law that it could even be said to lie *outside* the reach or below the line of Culture altogether' (6). The persistence of such monolithic perspectives and the relatively hard birth of 'modern ethnographic pluralism' are demonstrated by the way that Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922) ('regarded as a (if not the) founding work of modern ethnographic pluralism') 'harbors both old and new, singular and plural senses of culture' (7). No surprise then perhaps that Buzard finds 'even around 1900, among authors capable of considerable sympathy for the conditions, customs and institutions of so-called primitives, [...] an inconsistent pluralisation of *culture*, and frequently the persistent *avoidance* of it'. In the literary field it appears that Conrad, for example, according to the evidence of concordances of his writing, '*always* operated within the evolutionist discourse that treats of a single human Culture, never in one that treats of cultures' (6). Whereas another explorer of 'the geographical and epistemological frontiers between human groups', Mary Kingsley,<sup>16</sup> uses in her writing both singular and plural senses of culture, as Malinowski does after her. Loosely defining ethnography as 'study of a people's ways', Buzard seeks to show how novelists replicated 'the inward conceptual rhythms of anthropology' through their use and manipulation of narrative features in order to exploit 'that unstable relationship between insideness and outsideness that brings a culture into view' (39).<sup>17</sup> The later shift in method and perspective away from the twentieth-century anthropologist's 'immersion' as a kind of 'honorary insider' in another's culture, towards the studiously detached stance of autoethnography, is then marked by the replacement of 'a master narrative about the

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society' (Marcel Mauss in 1947) - or even that they 'should stop thinking of themselves as "bad scientists" and start considering themselves "bad novelists" instead' (Edmund Leach in 1982).

<sup>16</sup> Mary Kingsley features both in Pratt's book (Chapter 9) and in Woolf's *Three Guineas*. In *West African Studies* (1899) Kingsley writes of Africans having a culture 'of their own – not a perfect one, but one that could be worked up towards perfection, just as European culture could be worked up'; while in a later chapter titled 'The Clash of Cultures' in the same text, she writes of "the African" as being "in a lower culture state" (7).

<sup>17</sup> Here Buzard draws on Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books, 1973.

achievement of an outsider's insideness in another culture' with one which is about 'the attainment of an insider's outsideness with regard to one's own' (47). Thus the autoethnographer, and in certain genres the novelist as well, both gain 'the benefits of the strategically alienated viewpoint' (288), affording mobility and flexibility within and between different narrative and structural positions. 'The novelistic narrator gains authority by travelling outward or upward from or comprehensively among those separate positions in order to grasp their structural and moral interdependence' (47).

The central question posed in these debates about ethnography concerns the right of the narrator/observer to speak as a member of a community or culture which itself is the object of study. Buzard suggests that an adequate account of autoethnographic authority requires analysis of the logics, the narratives, the imagery, and the metaphors by means of which the autoethnographer might explain to themselves what they are up to. This involves examining both the rhetoric through which the autoethnographer indicates their fitness for the task, and the degree to which they take for granted their right and authority to perform this task. This aspect of the debate suggests a useful approach for critical reading of Woolf's methods in *Three Guineas* - and not only because, like Guaman Poma, Woolf adopts an epistolary style and also engages her interlocuter in mock interview (in the form of imagined dinner party exchange, for example, in which both the spoken and the unspoken is voiced and heard). In the epistolary exchange which frames Woolf's text, she carves out authorial positions which expose, contradict and seek to reverse women's exclusion from power. In interpellating her correspondent she also employs a number of strategies which both assert her right to write and speak, and at the same time emphasizes denial of such rights by a social system which segregates and excludes women from power.

### 7) Inside outsideness: 'the benefits of the strategically alienated viewpoint'<sup>18</sup>

The epistolary structure of *Three Guineas*, its main framing letter interwoven with layers of draft responses to other letters and requests, provides the narrator-correspondent with great flexibility and mobility regarding topic, perspective and voice. The initial exchange between differently positioned professionals -- a male lawyer seeking the female correspondent-narrator's opinion as to how impending war might be avoided -- frames the ensuing debate as a quasi-legal process of enquiry. The correspondents are of the same social class (sharing norms of polite exchange over a dinner table or in letter writing), but are divided by gender and education: fundamental differences which are examined as the enquiry proceeds. While the barrister's characteristics and history are painted in novelistic fashion with a few deft strokes, the female correspondent defines herself solely in class and gender terms: as the 'Daughter of an Educated Man'; and professionally as a writer, the only profession, apart from marriage, which until very recently has been open to her as a woman (120).

From the outset, ethnographic enquiry features as part of a debate about gender and class difference in a text which also mixes fiction and factual material, and whose audience is projected as middle-class women and men.<sup>19</sup> In Pratt's model, a key feature of autoethnographic texts and statements are that they are produced by someone on 'the receiving (or resisting) end of colonial power' and that they involve 'partial collaboration with and appropriation of the idioms of the conqueror' (6). In Woolf's text, the epistolary exchange is made across a segregated gender division between the domestic space of the private house and the masculine public world of privilege and power. Woolf's self-defining authorial position<sup>20</sup> confirms her formal membership of the bourgeois class of her

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<sup>18</sup> Buzard, 2005, 288.

<sup>19</sup> Barbara Andrew (1994, 86) comments on both Virginia Woolf and Mary Wollstonecraft, that 'each perceives her audience to be middle-class women and men'.

<sup>20</sup> In Note 2 (Chapter One) Woolf blames the prevailing 'inveterately anthropocentric' ideology for the need 'to coin this clumsy term -- educated man's daughter -- to describe the class whose fathers have been educated at public schools and universities' (TG 274). However, an earlier coinage is evident in Gissing's *The Odd Women* (1893). Rhoda Nunn, who works with Miss Barfoot 'combining benevolence with business [...] to train young girls for work in offices', says of her colleague, the benefactor -- "Miss Barfoot hasn't much interest in the lower classes; she wishes to be of use to the daughters of educated people' (24). Woolf's view is that educated men's

male kin (her insideness), while simultaneously emphasising her exclusion from the elite system of education, which precludes her in her gendered 'outsideness' from participation in the elite professions, including the priesthood and the military, or any social position of real power or influence. It distinguishes her from her father and brothers (by income and education as well as by gender), and from working class women (by class and education; poverty and the trap of marriage may not force her into actual prostitution as working class women may be forced 'to stand openly under the lamps of Piccadilly Circus' (130), but she is aware of pressures which could push her into prostituting her talents as a writer). As a self-educated and politically engaged woman, she is to be distinguished both from women of her class who are constrained by wifely deference to conceal their learning to avoid embarrassing their husbands, and also from under-educated women of her own class.<sup>21</sup> These careful distinctions identify classifiable difference (the highly specified category 'educated man's daughter' already implies a kind of ethnographic charting of the position from where male categories will in their turn be anatomised), and contribute to the defamiliarising effect of distance between the female observer and the observed world of men that is set up at the outset of the enquiry.

Insider/outsider positioning also establishes Woolf's rhetorical stance as 'Outsider' (surveyor and judge of the ceremonial hierarchy of the masculine public world). The 'Outsiders' Society' is invented for this purpose: the name is an oxymoron,<sup>22</sup> and its members – women (and some men), who are excluded, or exclude themselves, from a masculine defined world – announce their refusal or unwillingness to join 'the procession' of public display and professional endeavour, and this writer's reluctance to embrace the limitations of the formal equalities which recent legislation has accorded to women.<sup>23</sup>

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daughters 'can work much more effectively by remaining in their own class and using the methods of that class to improve a class which stands much in need of improvement'; she wonders 'what the true-born working man or woman thinks of the playboys and playgirls of the educated class who adopt the working-class cause without sacrificing middle-class capital, or sharing working-class experience' (Note 13, Chapter Three, *TG*, 310).

<sup>21</sup> E.g. 'under-educated' women such as Clarissa Dalloway in *Mrs Dalloway*, whose political unawareness indicates her 'un-readiness for citizenship'. Tate 1998, 157.

<sup>22</sup> Laura Marcus 2004, 172.

<sup>23</sup> Women's personal and political responsibility was much more recent than men's, dating from recent, or relatively recent, legislation: the right to own property (Married Woman's Property Act

Members of the Outsiders' Society are already spontaneously active: refusing to fight with weapons of war, adopting a stance of indifference towards honours, public ceremony and the dangerous seductions of patriotism; rejecting acquisitiveness and competition, demanding modest financial independence, and working for peace.

Other spatial metaphors also position the narrator-observer in relation to the object of her gaze, giving ethnographic mobility and authority to a dissenting voice. The historical moment is mixed and uncertain -- 'a hybrid age when, though birth is mixed, classes still remain fixed' -- an age in which it is 'convenient' to refer to her own class as 'the educated class' (118), though a deeply cut gulf divides men's and women's access to the education that determines in reality their social position. The narrator's 'standing on a bridge' indicates a historically significant 'moment of transition' (133) and a geo-political vantage point (on the Thames) from where Woolf's 'seeing woman' surveys the metropolitan centre of Empire, the male-controlled centres of political, commercial and financial power. Affording authority of both 'place' and 'voice', the viewpoint demonstrates that the imperial gaze of the possessive male is replaceable -- by the perspective of an inquisitorial, thinking and seeing woman whose historical potentiality is defined by the specificity of her class and gender.<sup>24</sup> The 'threshold of the private house' figures as the liminal place between private and the public worlds;<sup>25</sup> metaphors of bridge and door ('many doors are still locked, or at best ajar' (141)) mark the critical moment and the contradictory marginality of the formally enfranchised, but still dispossessed, young middle class woman.<sup>26</sup>

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1870), the granting of women's suffrage (1928), and entry into the professions (1919 Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act).

<sup>24</sup> 'Place' and 'voice' in narrative authority, Clifford (1992) and Buzard (2003); the male imperial gaze of 'the seeing man', Pratt (1992).

<sup>25</sup> cf George Gissing, *The Odd Women* (1893): 'The impression that every subject at issue in *The Odd Women* ends in an impasse is because of the fact that none of them is shown to be discrete, whether it is sexuality, gender, or class. [...] The impasse reflects not stasis but turbulence out of which change can result' (Ingham, P., 2000, xviii). Woolf refers to a similar 'turbulence' in the debates dramatised in *Three Guineas*.

<sup>26</sup> The symbolic opportunity represented by a door features in many of the working titles used at various stages during the composition of *Three Guineas*, e.g. 'The Open Door', 'A Tap at the Door' (Black 2001, xxvi).

Such narrative features combine with tropes of travel writing and well-honed weapons of satire to construct a rhetorical dimension within *Three Guineas* which can be called anthropological and ethnographic. As Silver (1983, 5) and other commentators have observed, luminaries of the 'common mind' of literature such as Hakluyt and Swift were early and continuing models for Woolf, feeding her imagination as she developed methods for exploring new worlds in her writing. Although she deploys less 'savage indignation' and rather more playful mockery than Swift, there are Swifitean echoes in Woolf's satiric method in *Three Guineas*. The interpellation of her correspondent, the English gentleman barrister, is done with nearly as much seeming innocence as the fictive composer of Swift's *Modest Proposal* is summoned up; and in the mock-anthropological descriptions of rites in the central 'temples' of masculine power, there are echoes of Gulliver's over-enthusiastic description of the bizarre practices of his own society (normal to Gulliver) to the amazed (and finally condemnatory) hearing of the King of Brobdingnag in Book Two of *Gulliver's Travels*.

Woolf began to employ such techniques in her earliest work. The exotic locale in *The Voyage Out* (1915), somewhere on the South American coast, borrows features from sixteenth and seventeenth-century English travel writing, to focus a distancing lens upon the mores and manners of a shipload of middle class English gentry who find themselves exposed on an alien shore. In similar vein, but with more sharply pointed irony, at various points in *Three Guineas* Woolf foregrounds Mary Kingsley, symbol of female independence and adventure undeterred by lack of educational privilege granted to her brother. Ironic recruitment of this pioneering woman explorer and anthropologist of West Africa as fellow investigator into the issue of how daughters can assert freedom in marital choice and outwit the possessive jealousy of fathers, makes play with the mysterious dark interior of the male psyche, animated by the 'savage', 'uncivilised' 'infantile fixation' of the father, as a territory equally worthy of anthropological investigation. Here, as in many places in this text, Woolf with some subtlety and indirection rhetorically places the matter

in question (women's marital and sexual freedom) within the frames of geographical exploration and anthropological/psychological enquiry.

Pratt and Buzard show how travel writing, narratives of exploration and anthropology share metaphors of 'knowledge as travel' as Pratt's 'seeing man' of European expansion and exploration appropriates territory and transforms landscape.<sup>27</sup> Christine Froula indicates how 'Woolf made the voyage of exploration her central metaphor for modernity's great adventure toward "new lands, ... new civilisations"'.<sup>28</sup> *The Voyage Out* illustrates how travel itself defamiliarises: as the ship conveying Rachel Vinrace to an unfulfillable marital destiny sails out of the sight of land, the known world is rendered mute, diminishes and disappears. '[A] shrinking island in which people were imprisoned [...] Europe shrank, Asia shrank, Africa and America shrank [...] an immense dignity had descended on her [the ship]; she was an inhabitant of the great world, which has so few inhabitants, travelling all day across an empty universe, with veils drawn before her and behind' (24-5). While in her first novel Woolf replaces Pratt's 'seeing man' with a barely educated young *ingénue* whose voyage constructs an alternative *Bildung*, in *Three Guineas* she uses tropes of travel to construct a strategically located 'seeing woman' who directs her critical gaze on the world of men. A satirical reversal of the colonial assumptions and anthropological perspectives of Pratt's 'seeing man' is effected to 'bring the ethnographic gaze back home'. The public professional world of English men and its elaborate ceremonial display are cast as alien and strange (to the female narrator). The interrogating gaze of the narrator-observer moves to a bridge in 'one of the great universities', turning, via the mediating figure of Mary Kingsley, to scrutinise the 'world of domes and spires, of lecture rooms and laboratories' and their historical mechanisms of exclusion. 'To those who behold it from Mary Kingsley's angle -- 'being allowed to learn German was *all* the paid for education I ever had -- it may well appear a world so remote,

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<sup>27</sup> Pratt 1992, Buzard 2003.

<sup>28</sup> Froula, C. 2005. *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde: War, Civilization, Modernity*, xii.



so formidable, so intricate in ceremonies and traditions that any criticism or comment may well seem futile' (142).

At an obvious and striking level, Woolf's use, as an adjunct implicitly informing the text, of the five photographs of prominent officiating men in ceremonial costume also recalls the use of photographs in ethnographies.<sup>29</sup> Although the (un-captioned) photographs are not explicitly presented as ethnographic evidence, Woolf's mock-anthropological intentions are clear. Alongside the photographs of Lord Baden Powell, encrusted with gold braid, sashes and medals, and that of sumptuously attired heralds trumpeting, the text focuses on the advertisement function of dress.

And still the tradition, or belief, lingers among us that to express worth of any kind, whether intellectual or moral, by wearing pieces of metal, or ribbon, coloured hoods or gowns, is a barbarity which deserves the ridicule which we bestow upon the rites of savages. A woman who advertised her motherhood by a tuft of horsehair on the left shoulder would scarcely, you will agree, be a venerable object (137).

The photographs were not included in editions of *Three Guineas* in the 1960s and 1970s,<sup>30</sup> (Jane Marcus has found no evidence of 'foul play' in this, but without them the power of the text is obviously reduced.) Marcus points to the connections which Woolf also sets up between 'The Pictures That Are Not There' (the photographs on the narrator-correspondent's desk of victims and destruction caused by Fascist bombing in Spain) and the five published photographs which illustrate 'English professional men in their garb of power': they 'alert us to the origins of war and fascism' (2006, lxi). Woolf here mixes 'facts' and 'fiction' with 'the linguistic and representational forms of the new media -- journalism, radio, photography'.<sup>31</sup> Sontag sees it as a new departure in literary, journalistic, polemical terms: '[b]eing a spectator of calamities taking place in another country is a quintessential modern experience'.<sup>32</sup> In her history of images of violence from

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<sup>29</sup> Here Virginia directly mirrors Leonard Woolf's more explicit linking of photographed images of contemporary political tyrants (Mussolini, Hitler) with images of tribal deities in *Quack, Quack!* 1935.

<sup>30</sup> Black's 2006 edition is the first American edition to reinstate the photographs. They appear in all the British editions discussed in this chapter, though not always deliberately interleaved in the relevant parts of the text as in the first Hogarth edition.

<sup>31</sup> Laura Marcus 2004, 153.

<sup>32</sup> Sontag, S. 2004. *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 18.

Goya's *Disasters of War* to the ubiquitous news footage and photographic reportage of modern warfare, Sontag notes that the Spanish Civil War (1936 – 39) was the first war to be witnessed ('covered') in the modern sense (18). She commends the 'brave, unwelcomed reflections on the roots of war' (3) in *Three Guineas*, but criticises the limitations of Woolf's political and historical analysis: 'To read in the pictures, as Woolf does, only what confirms a general abhorrence of war is to stand back from an engagement with Spain as a country with a history. It is to dismiss politics (8). In the barrister's question: 'How in your opinion are we to prevent war?', Woolf refuses to allow her male interlocutor 'to take a 'we' for granted'; however, the bold refusal is short-lived. In her rush to 'create the illusion of consensus' (5), Woolf not only 'subsides' back into this 'we' after making the 'feminist point', but also ignores the politics and history of this particular war. The photographed atrocities were the direct result of Franco's 'barbaric' targeting of civilians, 'using the same tactics of bombardment, massacre, torture, and the killing and mutilation of prisoners that he had perfected as a commanding officer in Morocco in the 1920s' (8). Sontag's point is telling, and suggests that Woolf's pacifism is somewhat removed from *realpolitik*. However, it is perhaps asking a lot of a writer in Woolf's milieu at this moment in history, that her historical perspective should be as accurately informed and her journalistic authority as strong as Sontag's exacting standards rightly demand. Faced with 'the enormity of her discoveries' (Shiach) and 'caught in a tempest' (Bell) as she was, it is perhaps not surprising that Woolf finally preferred to explore the consequences of her researches and discoveries 'on her own lines' as poet and artist rather than as a journalist or historian of war.

In the final sections of her 'reflections on the roots of war' Woolf reaches after a different kind of authority to justify her stance as a female pacifist of the educated class. Having from the outset placed herself on the outside of the masculine sphere to acquire autoethnographic authority and distance for her anatomy of masculine hierarchy and the rites and ceremonies of the 'male procession', in the last part of *Three Guineas*, as she turns her attention to the irrational, 'primitive' urges and sensations which animate male

emotion and underlie masculine need to dominate, she both calls upon and interrogates the authority of religious and classical texts: St Paul's *Epistles* and Sophocles's *Antigone*. Tropes of gendered power relations from these texts are applied to her analysis of the psychology of the fathers 'who threaten to pluck the heart out of their daughters' aspirations and ambitions'.<sup>33</sup> The concluding sections of this chapter focus on the means whereby Woolf assumes the right to challenge the patriarchal authority of Church and State, and expose the contradictions of an anthropocentric ideology which upholds masculine dominance by assuming feminine inferiority.

### **8) Religious authority: the veil of St Paul**

In her own epistle Woolf openly challenges the authority of the Apostle Paul in denying women's ancient right to prophesy and preach and excluding them from the priesthood.<sup>34</sup> Claiming that Christ chose his own disciples 'from the working class from which he sprang himself' in the belief 'that neither training nor sex was needed for this profession', she demands: 'How then can [women] be excluded from the priesthood since they were thought fit by the founder of the religion and by one of his apostles to preach?'.<sup>35</sup> Elevating on the authority of the Gospels the role of poet as equal in rank and influence to that of prophet or priest, and asserting her professional responsibility as a writer, she claims both rights and voice in the pulpit of public intellectual debate. The versatile metaphor of 'the veil that St Paul still lays upon our eyes' is used to exploit this rhetorical vantage point. Exclusion from the priesthood as 'the chief of the professions' highlights women's continuing exclusion from the elite professions, even after the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919; the veil thus signifies restrictions still placed on women's voice and sexual life.<sup>36</sup> It symbolises concealment (imposed or chosen) and a process of mediation – e.g. whether a female speaks directly (unveiled) or through a male

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<sup>33</sup> Laura Marcus 2004, 172

<sup>34</sup> Froula 2005.

<sup>35</sup> AROO & TG, Barrett M., ed, 1993, 250.

<sup>36</sup> Her dangerous sexuality, represented by her hair, must be covered 'in the Temple', lest wayward male spirituality be distracted (299); and though women could enter deprived areas of the city on missions of charitable work, they could not enter other areas, of low repute, un-chaperoned (unveiled) (300-01).

interpreter (veiled). As a medium of interpretation through which an expert authority (Professor Grensted) speaks on the narrator's behalf to throw light on the murky question of Freudian 'infantile fixation', the veil mediates between familiar, articulated thoughts and the dangerous zone of the unspoken unconscious. It signifies polite restraint in gender relations, upholding the fiction of gender equality in the conversation between narrator and lawyer but concealing mutual incomprehension and hostility across the gendered divide at the dinner table. It figures as a fragile barrier between the conscious and unconscious mind – unveiled speech (unmediated by Professor Grensted) would reveal the (as yet unanalysed) unspoken violence of gender confusion in the Freudian subconscious.

But what analysis can we attempt of [...] the powerful and subconscious motives that are raising the hackles on your side of the table? Is the old savage who has killed a bison asking the other old savage to admire his prowess? Is the tired professional man demanding sympathy and resenting competition? Is the patriarch calling for a siren? Is dominance craving for submission? And, most persistent and difficult of all the questions that our silence covers, what possible satisfaction can dominance give to the dominator? (257).

Whether or not the new theory of psychoanalysis can articulate answers to such questions is a conundrum to which Woolf repeatedly returns in the novels. While versions of these 'persistent and difficult' questions are often indirectly raised in scenes of gendered conflict or in masculine responses to ideological or emotional confusion, answers are usually to be inferred rather than made explicit. Direct references to Freud's theory become more frequent in the later work, as Woolf returns in different ways to the psychoanalytical themes first explicitly broached in *To The Lighthouse*. In the first novel, *The Voyage Out*, which stages an alternative *Bildung* for Rachel, patriarchal authority is indirectly attacked by dissenting males of Bloomsbury-ite persuasion. Hewet's pedagogical role is mainly affective; his view of masculine dominance as an outmoded illusion sustained by misplaced respect, female compliance and the bullying of striving bourgeois men rather shocks Rachel at first, but later helps to encourage her towards marriage. As mentor of Rachel's intellectual development, Hirst influences her reading and critical perspectives; his fierce anti-clericalism feeds her revolt against the priestly hypocrisy of the Reverend Bax. Veering between the Old Testament ravings of an 'old savage ... in the desert' and a

canting sermon, the Anglican priest misrepresents colonialism as brotherly love to a 'slavishly acquiescent' congregation; while Hirst's reading of Sappho in the back pew directs Rachel's epiphany into new awareness (VO 215-17). Unresolved conflict reappears in the monumental and strangely empty rage of Mr Hilbery in *Night and Day*, storming out of the room when his authority over his daughter's marriage choice is flouted (ND 426). Inter-generational conflicts recur in the oedipal exchanges (both veiled and unveiled) between the Ramsays in *To The Lighthouse*; and in the semi-concealed, symbolical conflicts over love and money in *The Pargiters* and *The Years*. As Woolf seeks to combine the 'truth' of fiction with the sociological veracity of empirical 'facts', answers of a more explicit kind are more forthcoming in these later texts. Finally in *Three Guineas* a more explicit statement of Woolf's construction of masculinity is made, embedded though it is within layers of epistolary polemic.

Whereas in 'Professions for Women' (1931) Woolf writes of a woman writer's need to 'perform a symbolic matricide' by killing the 'mother-figure' ('The Angel in the House')<sup>37</sup> in order to free her creativity from the mute subservience of feminine restraint, Laura Marcus argues that in *Three Guineas* she 'attacks the rule of fathers, literal and figurative'.<sup>38</sup> The attempt to unearth (or at least to try to understand) the roots of the male 'fighting instinct', logically precedes a proposal for a less primitive and more civilised social order. Linking the "primitive" nature of a supposedly civilized society's most treasured rituals with the primitive "infantile fixation" of society's fathers' (173), Woolf, as Freud did, looks to Greek tragedy, although her concern is with Antigone rather than with her father Oedipus.<sup>39</sup> Woolf is 'psychoanalytically informed' (in Laura Marcus's phrase) in this part of her investigations and makes use of Freudian concepts ('infantile fixation', 'castration

<sup>37</sup> Christ, C. 1977. 'Victorian Masculinity and the Angel in the House'; *The Poems of Coventry Patmore*, 1949.

<sup>38</sup> Laura Marcus 2004, 172.

<sup>39</sup> Barrett (xxvi) notes Woolf's 'early preoccupation with questions of masculinity and the subconscious sources of men's behaviour' in 'Professions for Women' (given as a speech in 1931), and her use in *Three Guineas* of 'idea of an "infantile fixation" very loosely and idiosyncratically drawn from psychoanalysis' in her discussion of paternal jealousy and desire for control over daughters (xxxvii). Similarly Shiach points to Woolf's use in *Three Guineas* of a 'very inexact concept of infantile fixation', her understanding of 'masculinity as a socially produced category, her efforts to identify the 'unconscious forces' behind men's resistance to change, and her focus on Creon and Antigone as an archetypal version of the father-daughter relationship (xxvii).

complex'), albeit in deliberately indirect ways (i.e. 'veiled' and mediated by quoting Professor Grensted). Here, as in her fiction, she seeks to analyse significant scenes from family life, a process akin to psychoanalysis, as critics have suggested (e.g. Poole 1978, Abel 1989, Lee 1996). In *Three Guineas* she tracks the 'savage' of her anthropological investigation back into his home territory:

For Woolf, the home of 'infantile fixation' is the Victorian family house and, in the father-daughter relationships of the Barretts, the Brontës, and the Jex-Blakes, she finds the desire of the fathers to control and possess their daughters. These 'ancient and obscure emotions' are fully ratified [...] by our ostensibly 'civilized' and rational society.<sup>40</sup>

Abel's reading of *Three Guineas* suggests that Woolf's political agenda is 'less to articulate a pacifist response to the fascist threat' (her stated goal) than to bring 'impending war home', to 're-situate the battlefield in the British family and workplace'; furthermore, in her investigation of father-daughter sexuality in this late text she 'for the first time turns openly to Freud'.<sup>41</sup> Abel argues that Fascist appropriation of an ideology of 'matriotism' caused Woolf to abandon her earlier matrilineal definition of the daughter (as in *A Room of One's Own*) and to adopt, in her 'social history of gender', the patrilineal definition used in *Three Guineas*. Towards the end of the text she sees Woolf as returning to reopen a question not yet resolved, which is posed by the epistolary form, and so to 'initiate an explicitly psychoanalytical moment' in the text. 'A certain specularity haunts *Three Guineas*: father and daughter, Freud and Woolf, male and female correspondents face each other across an abyss that can be negotiated only in the discourse of the father'. But resolution is still deferred: 'Grensted's veil enables Woolf to redesign the ethics but not the structure of the father-daughter exchange' (107).

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<sup>40</sup> Laura Marcus, 173.

<sup>41</sup> Abel, E. 1989. *Virginia Woolf and the fictions of psychoanalysis*, 89, 41.

### 9) Questions of Authority: Authorial, Civic and Ethical

The profound psychological, political and dramatic questions posed in Sophocles's *Antigone* are also ones to which Woolf repeatedly returned.<sup>42</sup> In his survey of the significance of Sophocles's *Antigone* in Enlightenment thought and sensibility, Steiner places *Antigone*, as an emblematic text, 'at the pivot of consciousness', as he explores treatment of the theme in the work of Hegel, Holderlin and Schelling.<sup>43</sup> Tracing the development of a 'veritable cult of Sophocles' in French theatre, which drew on the 'rhetoric, the programmatic mythologies and the ceremonials of the French Revolution' and gave prominence to the ideals of women's emancipation, Steiner argues that *Antigone* dramatised the weight of responsibility placed on women: 'the hallowed burden of civic presence, those duties and licences of public utterance which the *ancien regime* has denied them'. 'The rights of man, as 1789 voiced them, are emphatically, the rights of women' (9). Quoting George Eliot: 'the conflict [...] dramatised clashes of private conscience and public welfare' (141), Steiner discusses *Antigone* as a dialectic of intimacy and exposure, of private and historical existence, a political and philosophical legacy of the ideals of 1789. The play focuses on the intimacies between sisters, and between sisters and brothers, which make up the fabric of kinship. Suggesting that from the 1790s until the early twentieth-century, 'radical lines of kinship run horizontally', Steiner identifies 'sisterliness' as a valued intimacy at the core of Idealism and Romanticism (citing prominent literary and historical examples of highly valued sister-brother relationships, such as those of Wordsworth, Shelley, Charles Lamb, Hegel and Macauley). He suggests that from the early twentieth-century the Freudian construct shifted emphasis onto the vertical lines of relationships between children and parents, and with this momentous shift, 'Oedipus replaces Antigone' (18).<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> In *The Voyage Out* (1915), 'On not knowing Greek' (1925), 'Thoughts on peace in an air raid' (1940), *The Years* (1937), *Three Guineas* (1938).

<sup>43</sup> Steiner 1984, 141.

<sup>44</sup> Butler (2000) comments that, though Steiner poses the controversial question: 'What would happen if psychoanalysis were to have taken Antigone rather than Oedipus as its point of departure?' – he does not pursue it. However, she by no means suggests that an answer might easily be found, given the complicated and transgressive relationships within this primal family – 'Antigone's father is her brother, since both share a mother in Jocasta, and her brothers are her nephews, sons of her brother-father, Oedipus. The terms of kinship become irreversibly equivocal' (57). Butler indicates that the failure of *Antigone* to produce heterosexual closure for that drama,

The symbolic role played by Antigone in Woolf's *Three Guineas* runs counter to this trend. In her representation of kinship relations Woolf emphasises sisters' lack of the educational advantages given to their brothers, and focuses upon the saliency of father-daughter relationships in determining middle class women's social position. Drawing selectively upon Freud and reversing the tendency identified by Steiner, Antigone replaces Oedipus in a text which gives political voice to 'sisterhood' rather than a fraternally defined 'sisterliness'. While the figure of Antigone plays a powerful legitimating role in this late text, in the early *The Voyage Out*, Woolf introduces the theme almost as if by accident -- in a seeming conversational non-sequitur. With well practised social skill, Clarissa Dalloway fills an awkward pause in conversation by recalling a memorable performance of Sophocles's drama which continues to haunt her (34 - 37). However inconsequential the surface of the conversation appears to be -- led by the Dalloways, the talk shifts from the question of women's suffrage and an account of a confrontation between Richard Dalloway MP and an activist suffrage campaigner, falters in desultory debate over the relative merits and effectiveness in addressing injustice in the world of politicians and artists, and then grinds to an uncomfortable halt -- its underlying logic shows Woolf, already in this early novel, consciously linking the personal and the public, art and politics, polite conversation and Greek tragedy, through the haunting figure of Antigone.

The structural and symbolic significance with which *Antigone* is invested in *Three Guineas* is an indication of the drama's importance in the long-term development of Woolf's ideas. Aligning herself with nineteenth-century champions of women's emancipation (Gertrude Bell, Mary Kingsley, Josephine Butler), Woolf follows Antigone's time-honoured example in taking an ethical stance against violation of fundamental laws of humanity. Behind both the warlike images of contemporary Fascist national leaders and domestic tyrants of the private household lurks the terrifying presence of Creon, as the type of all masculine tyrants and dictators, invading the photographs of war on Woolf's desk, standing in the

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'may intimate the direction for a psychoanalytic theory that takes Antigone as its point of departure' (76).



foreground as the culpable instigator of devastation and death, the figure of 'Man himself, the quintessence of virility'.

His eyes are glazed; his eyes glare. His body, which is braced in an unnatural position, is tightly cased in a uniform. Upon the breast of that uniform are sewn several medals and other mystic symbols. His hand is upon a sword. He is called in German and Italian Fuhrer or Duce; in our own language Tyrant or Dictator. And behind him lie ruined houses and dead bodies - men, women and children (129).

Emulating Antigone in her public opposition to a tyrant's violation of ethics governing intimate human relationships and upholding social/civic responsibility, the narrator-correspondent's intervention in this deeply contested territory is made not without trepidation.

There are two good reasons why we must try to analyse both our fear and your anger; first because such fear and anger prevent real freedom in the private house; second, because such fear and anger may prevent real freedom in the public world: they may have a positive share in causing war. Let us then grope our way amateurishly enough among these very ancient and obscure emotions which we have known ever since the time of Antigone and Ismene and Creon at least; which St. Paul himself seems to have felt; but which the professors have only lately brought to the surface and named "infantile fixation", "Oedipus complex", and the rest (257-8).

Making striking connection between a passage in *The Years* (1937) and Jean Anouilh's 1942 production of *Antigone* in occupied Paris, Steiner draws attention to the continuing power of Antigone's ethical resistance to masculine dictatorship in the context of twentieth century industrial-scale warfare. The 'unimaginable condition [of] between a quarter and a third of a million men left unburied between the trenches during the battle of Verdun [...] underlies Creon's taunt in Anouilh's *Antigone*. In no man's land the unburied bodies are soon pounded into an indiscriminate *bouillie* ('mash'). There can be no way of distinguishing between Eteocle and Polynice, between the would-be traitor or deserter and the Unknown Soldier honoured by the eternal flame'. For Steiner, Virginia Woolf's vision of the scene (which occurs in a dream sequence in *The Years*) is 'the most hallucinatory, the most knowing in its macabre sexuality' (141). In the '1907' section of the novel Sally drifts on a hot night, with late-night dance music in her ears, between febrile dream-state and semi-awake reading of Edward Pargiter's translation of *Antigone*. 'The unburied body of a murdered man lay like a fallen tree-trunk, like a statue, with one foot

stark in the air. Vultures gathered.... Quick, quick, quick with repeated jerks they struck the mouldy flesh' (TY 110).

The value of 'sorority' and the significance of relationships between sisters and brothers are explored at different levels in *Three Guineas*. Woolf's authority here derives from her use of the figure of Antigone as an emancipatory symbol of defiance against the laws of a patriarchal tyrant. Judith Butler (2000), commenting on readings of *Antigone* by Hegel, Lacan, Irigaray and others, writes that Antigone can be seen

not as a political figure, one whose defiant speech has political implications, but rather as one who articulates a pre-political opposition to politics, representing kinship as the sphere that constrains the possibility of politics without ever entering into it (2).

If (in Hegel's account) Antigone 'comes to represent kinship and its dissolution', and Creon to represent 'an emergent ethical order and state authority based on principles of universality', Butler focuses on Antigone's choice of death rather than marriage and heterosexuality.

Certainly, she [Antigone] does not achieve another sexuality, one that is *not* heterosexuality, but she does seem to deinstatate heterosexuality by refusing to do what is necessary by refusing to stay alive for Haemon, by refusing to become a mother and wife, by scandalising the public with her wavering gender, by embracing death as her bridal chamber and identifying her tomb as a 'deep dug home' (76).

Butler's reading of Antigone's choice of death as refusal – refusal of marriage and heterosexual norms, and of status in law as daughter of Creon – corresponds with Woolf's deployment of Antigone's challenge as one which undermines the roots of 'infantile fixation', disarms and exposes the jealous rage and illicit desires of the Victorian father, and which by articulating, however inchoately, 'a pre-political opposition' to the social/political order of masculine domination, creates the possibility of an alternative order while rallying opposition to the existing order.

## 10) Conclusion

As the analysis of six editions of *Three Guineas* shows, scholarly research in recent decades into Woolf's methods of composition has created the conditions for fuller understanding of this complex text and of Woolf's methods for analysing relations of gender and power. As the text wherein Woolf's construction of masculinity is most clearly delineated, *Three Guineas* employs a range of formal devices and rhetorical strategies to survey and anatomise the masculine public sphere. Woolf's use of epistolary form creates a discursive frame for direct interpellation of 'the entire class of educated men'<sup>45</sup> in pursuit of the question of the causes of war; constructs a quasi-legal enquiry into the causes of female subordination and exclusion; and creatively deploys the 'spyglass of anthropology'<sup>46</sup> to investigate a specifically masculine psychology which links a state of dependency upon women with a need to dominate and dictate in both private and public spheres. The late twentieth century concept of autoethnography helps to elucidate ways in which Woolf claims authority to undertake such an investigation – rivalling Freud in her recourse to the authority of classical texts (*Antigone*), and by engaging the epistolary apostle Paul in an epistolary challenge of her own. This chapter serves as a prelude to further investigation into how in her fiction and other writing Woolf represents masculinity and the masculine 'train of thought' – identified in 'The Mark on the Wall' (1917) as a peculiarly masculine way of thinking and classifying knowledge. In the final section of *Three Guineas* the published images of men 'in their garb of power' and the photographs on the writer's desk from the Spanish Civil War documenting material damage and human casualties merge into a single image: in the foreground the figure of the Fuhrer/Duce/Tyrant/Dictator, 'tightly cased in his uniform', on which are sewn 'medals and other mystic symbols'; and behind him 'ruined houses and dead bodies - men, women and children' (270). The composite image indicates both our (as readers) own complicity (we 'are ourselves that figure') and our responsibility (as thinkers and political actors) – for not only have we elevated the dictator, but also 'by our thoughts and actions can change that figure' (271). Carlston identifies amongst Woolf's rhetorical devices a 'strategy of

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<sup>45</sup> Carlston 1998, 141.

<sup>46</sup> Buzard 2003, 72. Here Buzard quotes Zora Neale Hurston's phrase in *Mules and Men* (1935).

displaced narrative identity', which has a more radical effect on the construction of the reader of the text, or on 'any of the addressees or implied readers of the "metatext" of *Three Guineas*', than it has on the role of the author (141). Suggesting that the 'intricate layering of voices, shifting narrative identities and convoluted loops of argumentation diffuse and defer narrative authority' (140), Carlston also indicates how devices such as embedded narratives and the use of indirect speech make it difficult 'to attribute political views to particular speakers, let alone to such a fragmented character as the "author"'.<sup>47</sup> A consequence of such layering and instability of voice and identity is that 'the reader is constantly reminded of their own class position ... you/we will mean very different things to female and male readers or those of different classes'. In Carlston's reading, *Three Guineas* and the way in which we read it is thus structured by the questions of power and ownership that the text addresses: 'who has capital and who needs it, and under what circumstances can women control capital in patriarchal society' (141). Woolf's category, 'educated man's daughter', foregrounds relations between fathers and daughters and establishes an analogy, 'elaborated throughout the text, between the private world of the patriarchal family and the public world of capitalist property relations' (142).

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<sup>47</sup> Mary Kingsley is invoked, for example, and invited 'to speak for us': this momentary 'slippage into another woman's voice' makes her, and Woolf, into 'spokeswomen for [their] sex', creating 'we' out of 'I'. (*ibid.*)

## CHAPTER THREE

### Family, kinship and class

#### 1) Introduction

This chapter focuses on three novels, *Night and Day* (1919), *To The Lighthouse* (1927) and *The Years* (1937), and *A Room of One's Own* (1929). The novels closely examine familial relationships: two within the enclosed setting of a single household; while *The Years* traces the fortunes of an extended family over time. Each highlights a stage in the development of Woolf's methods for representing gender relations in historical change. The early *Night and Day* and the late *The Years* focus on questions of women's vocations, careers and employment,<sup>1</sup> while a key strand of the psychological action of *To The Lighthouse* examines the female role in creating and sustaining an illusion of domestic unity and continuity as the basis for family congeniality and masculine self-belief. Comparison of the households reveals mechanisms whereby masculine pre-eminence in the household is maintained or eroded. The extent to which male characters can assume superior status is put in question as the structure of power upholding their households is shown to be inherently unstable and contingent, as traditionally unacknowledged masculine psychological dependence upon assumed female inferiority is increasingly exposed.

By means of close reading set against the context of contemporary debates, the chapter seeks to track the evolution of an autoethnographic mode for reflecting in fiction an unfolding crisis of hegemonic masculinity. Woolf's political stance evolved as she matured; and the clearest evidence for this is in her writing – not only in her essays of polemic and social comment, but also throughout her fiction. Her belief that the truth of 'fact' is essentially different from the truth of 'fiction' meant that she sought progressively to dispense with historical detail in fiction, replacing specific contextualisation with an

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<sup>1</sup> Whitworth 2005, 151-7.

'eye'/I'-less and increasingly perspective-less style of narration.<sup>2</sup> However, in the decade of the 1930s after completing *The Waves* she experimented with combining fact and fiction in the unfinished *The Pargiters*.<sup>3</sup> Its 'novel-essay' format juxtaposed fictional episodes of family saga with sociological commentary, but the combination proved unworkable and the fictional episodes were reworked as *The Years*. This chapter seeks to discern traces in *The Years* of Woolf's autoethnographic strategy for observing, recording and representing relations of gender and power in the domestic sphere. She had originally aimed at such an effect: '[b]ut perhaps an outsider -- and it is part of a writer's profession to be an outsider -- can see aspects of things that are not visible from the inside', she wrote in the First Essay of *The Pargiters* (xl).

The Essays in the draft text of *The Pargiters* were to be overtly sociological, and consequently the published text of *The Years* (deriving from it) is sociologically informed, and historically framed as a family chronicle. While *Night and Day* looks chronologically backwards at a now defunct literary reference-point of the highest achievement, which haunts and debilitates family functioning in the present; *The Pargiters/The Years* traces forwards the diminishing social status of the Pargiter clan (episodes are strewn with deaths, social mobility is mostly downward and men's careers disappear without trace).<sup>4</sup> Mitchell Leaska and Jane Marcus have pointed out how the etymology of the word 'parget' ('to plaster': hence 'cover over', 'whitewash', 'conceal') symbolises the precarious nature of the family's respectability, as seeming stability turns to dissolution.<sup>5</sup> The resilience of some individuals (mainly unmarried woman such as the central character Eleanor) in making do and surviving is perhaps also a tribute to their abilities in 'pargeting' in the literal sense of patching and making good. The third novel, *To The Lighthouse*, stands apart from the other two in that its autobiographical dimension crucially opens the way for generational change to be examined from an overtly psychoanalytical perspective.

Freud's internal topography of the mind is symbolically rendered externally as land- and

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<sup>2</sup> Banfield 2000.

<sup>3</sup> An unfinished draft not published until Mitchell Leaska's edited *The Pargiters. The Novel-Essay Portion of The Years*, 1978.

<sup>4</sup> Lipking 1977, 141.

<sup>5</sup> Leaska, ed, 1978, xiv.

seascape, within and against which characters play out conflicts of unconscious feeling and consciously expressed interaction, the weather and the sea figuring as zones of male conflict and female reflection. The First World War is submerged in the text as an underwater conflict of huge, displaced consequence upon the consciousness of the surviving, succeeding generation. Woolf's personal and aesthetic resolutions arising out of the integrating process of writing the novel become evident in the later *The Years*, which deploys a remarkable combination of psychoanalytical and sociological perspective in tracing Pargiter family fortunes.

## **2) Possible influences on Woolf's self-positioning as 'Outsider'**

While Woolf was not forthcoming about the many strands of influence which shaped and sustained her development as a writer of feminist and left-leaning persuasion, it is possible to trace certain parallels in the formulation of the issues which she addressed in her political essays through an examination of the writings of earlier and contemporaneous writers on the 'woman question', such as Edward Aveling (1849 - 1898) and Eleanor Marx (1855 - 1898), and Olive Schreiner (1855 - 1920). Aveling and Eleanor Marx in their pamphlet *The Woman Question* (1886) set out a utopian socialist position on the emancipation of women, arguing that 'the position of women rests [...] on an economic basis', and that 'without larger social change women will never be free' (4). In this analysis, both women and workers ('the immediate producers') are categorised as 'oppressed classes', each being 'the creatures of an organised tyranny' – 'of men' in the one case; and of profiteering 'idlers' in the other. The authors follow Karl Marx in asserting that for both classes emancipation will have to come from themselves. Allies in other classes, and from the opposite sex, may be found – 'for women among the better sort of men, as for labourers among the philosophers, artists and poets' (6) – however, neither should hope or expect any assistance from men as whole, or from the middle class as a whole.

The fact that the women's movement in England did not in the late nineteenth century have a significant working-class base was a political condition of which Woolf was aware.<sup>6</sup> It is discussed in *Three Guineas*, *The Leaning Tower*, and elsewhere, and would seem to have influenced her decisions to direct her address in her polemical writing specifically to members of her own class, and to treat middle class women ('daughters of educated men') as a class fraction, defined in economic terms, specifically because of their economic dependence upon men.<sup>7</sup> It is possible too that in her own search for like-minded allies in the borderlands of feminism, Fabian socialism and pacifism, Woolf may have drawn from Aveling and Marx, and from contemporary debates, the idea of limited class alliances, to inform her own epistolary appeal in *Three Guineas* to a well-meaning, liberal-minded barrister about how women and men might collaborate against growing militarism and impending war. Her discussions in these and other texts of marriage, prostitution and the sexual double standard were also undoubtedly influenced by contemporary debates, themselves shaped by the writings of J. S. Mill.<sup>8</sup> Aveling and Marx, quoting Mill on marriage (the 'only actual form of serfdom recognised by law'), go on to specify that 'our marriages, like our morals, are based upon commercialism; weddings are business [...] barter transactions' (8). While Woolf in *Three Guineas* does not elaborate specifically on marriage as a commercial exchange between men, this is implicit in her argument, and her conclusion accords with that of Aveling and Marx: that marriage is 'worse than prostitution' (9).

Woolf reviewed *The Letters of Olive Schreiner* (1924) for the *New Republic* in 1925 (Hussey 1995, 390).<sup>9</sup> While she makes no direct reference to Schreiner's *Woman and Labour* (1911), Woolf's own treatment, in both fiction and social commentary, of questions

<sup>6</sup> British socialism was 'little more than a literary movement' with 'but a fringe of working men on its border'; while suffrage activists were drawn 'mostly from the well-to-do classes', Aveling and Marx, 1886, 4.

<sup>7</sup> Rowbotham (1992, 58) indicates that in the 1840s Chartist women not only had strong awareness of their rights, but did so 'as gendered members of a class'.

<sup>8</sup> Mill's view that women's inequality was a relic from the past with no place in the modern world, and one of the major obstacles to human improvement is echoed throughout Woolf's writing.

<sup>9</sup> Woolf described Schreiner as 'one half of a great writer; a diamond marked by a flaw', *New Republic*, 18 March 1925. Jane Marcus (1987, 63) identifies certain affinities between Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) and Woolf's *The Years* (1937).



of female labour (e.g. middle class women's access to professional employment), and her views on the potential for qualitative change in relations between the sexes, suggest familiarity at least with the broad outline, if not the detail, of Schreiner's text -- a work which became 'one of the touchstones of the suffrage movement'.<sup>10</sup> Similarities between their treatment of the question of women and labour suggest that Woolf was influenced by Schreiner's arguments, especially in the construction of her argument in *Three Guineas* about women's position on the threshold between the private house and the public world. These include the recognition that the profession of writing was long accessible to women: for Schreiner because modern fiction is 'the only art that can be exercised without special training or special appliances'; for Woolf because '[t]he cheapness of writing paper is, of course, the reason why women have succeeded as writers before they have succeeded in the other professions'.<sup>11</sup>

A further parallel of note is that both writers use the image of a knock at the door to figure women's quest for entry into hitherto closed fields of professional employment. Schreiner refers to the 'solemn importance of the knock of the humblest woman at the closed door which shuts off a new field of labour, physical or mental', and goes on to ask rhetorically, in the light of her analysis of the central importance to the health of the whole nation (and race) of women's participation in productive work: 'is she convinced that not for herself, but in service of the whole race, she knocks?' (127-8). In *Three Guineas* Woolf makes much play with images of a threshold guarded by closed or half-open doors, and of women knocking to seek entry into the public world.<sup>12</sup> Another noteworthy link between the two texts is Schreiner's reference to the elaborate apparel and decoration of 'the savage male' and the bewigged and ornamented European gentleman -- which is echoed

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<sup>10</sup> Bristow, J. 1992, xxv. Introduction *The Story of an African Farm*.

<sup>11</sup> Schreiner 1911, 158; Woolf 'Professions for Women', in Barrett, ed, 1993, 356.

<sup>12</sup> Both writers' use of this image echoes Aveling and Eleanor Marx's promise of assistance from allies across class divisions -- as Schreiner (1911) puts it: 'There is no door at which the hand of woman has knocked for admission into a new field of toil but there have been found on the other side the hands of strong and generous men eager to turn it for her, almost before she knocks' (280).

in Woolf's lampooning of male ceremonial attire in *Three Guineas*.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, Schreiner's reference to the tragi-comic confusion caused in modern sexual relations by anachronistic belatedness in terms of social evolution on the part of one partner or the other,<sup>14</sup> recalls Woolf's frequent use of the epithet 'savage' in describing primitive aspects of behaviour of the 'unmodified' (or unreconstructed) modern male (this is especially marked in Woolf's depictions of relationships between jealous fathers and dutiful daughters).

There are also similarities between their treatment of the question of future, potentially improved sexual relations, and linked questions about women's participation in socially useful labour and their rights as citizens. In this connection Shiach identifies particular difficulties faced by women writing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century 'as they try to imagine the possible relations between women, labour and the essentially human' – difficulties caused by a rhetorical conflation of the masculine, the human, and labour as social activity, by influential enlightenment thinkers and political economists, such as Locke and Adam Smith. 'Despite the prominence of women in both domestic and industrial labour in the periods when both [Locke and Smith] are writing, produce a vision of a very masculine *homo faber*'.<sup>15</sup> In writing through these difficulties, Schreiner and Woolf both emphasise the heroic nature of venturing women's claims for recognition of their intellectual worth and right to education and training. Woolf's portrait in *A Room of One's Own* of the snuffed-out Judith Shakespeare, the playwright's fictional sister, predates her accounts in *Three Guineas* of modern women's struggle against fathers and brothers for their share of 'Arthur's Education Fund' – i.e. the right to education, training, and intellectual and professional status. Schreiner summons up as 'a landmark in the

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<sup>13</sup> 'The savage male of today when attired in his paint, feathers, cats tails and necklaces is an immeasurably more ornamented and imposing figure than his female [...] and the males of Europe a couple of centuries ago in their powdered wigs, lace ruffles and cuffs, paste buckles, feathered cocked hats ... were quite as ridiculous in their excess of ornament as the complementary female of his own day, or the most parasitic females of this' (184).

<sup>14</sup> 'The sexual tragedy of modern life is the unassorted confusion [with which] the modified type of man or woman is thrown into the closest personal relations with an antiquated type of the opposite sex [...] between father and daughter, mother and son, brother and sister, husband and wife may sometimes be found to intervene not merely years, but even centuries of social evolution' (273).

<sup>15</sup> Shiach 2004, 21.

course of human evolution' the heroic figure of 'the half-starved student, battling against gigantic odds to take her place beside men in fields of modern intellectual toil' (126), as she articulates her demand in a 'strange new cry: "Labour and the training that fits us for labour!"' (283).

Both writers also project into the future a vision of utopian sexual completeness, seeking to overcome the gendered constraints and moral hypocrisies of the bourgeois/patriarchal order and its ideologically elaborated separation of spheres. Schreiner's vision of an evolving new man is couched in biblical terms – 'the day of Goliath with his club and his oaths is fast passing, and the day of David with his harp and skilfully constructed sling is coming near and yet nearer' (213). Her dream is of 'a Garden in a distant future [...] we dream that women shall eat of the same tree of knowledge as men' (282). The dream of gender compatibility has affinities with Woolf's vision of an androgynous mind – 'Neither is the woman without the man nor the man without the woman, the completed human intelligence' (196). In similar vein Aveling and Marx cite Immanuel Kant as an authority for their vision of an emancipated world in which 'men and women constitute, when united, the whole and entire being; one sex completes the other'. While in the present each is 'stunted and incomplete', and women in particular are incomplete – 'to a most lamentable extent [...] when, as a rule, neither comes into real, thorough, habitual, free contact, mind to mind, with the other, the being is neither whole nor entire' (7).

### **3) Ideologies of sexual difference; separated spheres**

It is possible that Woolf's understanding of the historical contingency of the family as a social unit, and of ascribed gender roles within it, was influenced by Engels's *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*.<sup>16</sup> The periodisation proposed in Engels's influential work and the adoption of Morgan's anthropological evidence (later exposed as highly questionable) continue to be controversial, and it is now generally accepted that

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<sup>16</sup> Engels's *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* was published in German in 1884 but not translated into English until the early 1900's.

there is no simple chronological account of the complex interplay of factors which produced the modern concept of the family. Engels' historicising account of the family is still significant in countering tendencies to naturalise the nuclear family as a transhistorical norm.<sup>17</sup> While Woolf does not in the three novels considered here elaborate a historical perspective on the family as a social unit, such a perspective is implied in the treatment of gender roles within the families represented. Sedgwick's suggestion that Thackeray and George Eliot were 'inspired specialist[s] in analysis of gender roles as forms of power' could very well also be applied to Woolf.<sup>18</sup> Her attention to the minutiae of psychic and social exchange in familial relationships gives a special intensity to her analytic, fictionalised accounts of gender roles.<sup>19</sup> There is perhaps also a historically ironic parallel between Engels's use of Morgan's crudely evolutionist model of the history of the family and the mock periodisation and play with evolutionary 'stages' which Woolf frequently satirically applies to aberrant ('uncivilised') forms of masculinity ('savagery') in need of change.

Pictures of family life in the three novels depart variously from the unrealisable mid-nineteenth-century ideal wherein female management of domestic space quietly creates a smooth-running, comfortable environment in which men can exert authority, display professional and personal importance, take their leisure, entertain guests, and come and go at will with a minimum exertion of effort or energy. The illusion of effortless order in the domestic sphere, sustained by largely hidden female labour, is strongest in the earliest novel, *Night and Day*, and it is made clear that it is Katherine's duty and her special talent – as only, female child – to secure it. In *To The Lighthouse* the highly specialised quality (and the exhausting nature) of the emotional labour that is required to create and sustain the ordered spontaneity of the large holiday household of family and guests is revealed; the psychic environment of the third section of the novel is conditioned by the aftermath of war and its social consequences, the death of family members and the irreversible loss of

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<sup>17</sup> Hunt 2010.

<sup>18</sup> Sedgwick 1985, 147.

<sup>19</sup> It is no accident that the title of Edward Albee's play *Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962) still has resonance. See Silver 1999, 119.

the semi-magical (angelic) life-giving powers of Mrs Ramsay. In *The Years* much rougher-edged family dynamics barely conceal tensions, resentments and guilt-laden exchanges, as succeeding generations of Pargiters make up diminished households, some of them increasingly threadbare.

### **Night and Day (1919)**

In *Night and Day*, the Hilbery family's illustrious literary heritage is comically sketched as an imposing background against which the noble duty of writing a biography worthy of Katherine's grandfather, the deceased Richard Alardyce, appears an ever more unachievable task. (His remains lie in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey; but no biography is yet written.) That the task should fall to two women, the renowned poet's daughter and granddaughter, is ironic given the burdens of Woolf's own childhood experience as daughter of the first editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography*.<sup>20</sup> Also Mrs Hilbery's elaborate but ineffectual attempts as 'spiritual head of the family' to fulfil the role of literary biographer put curiously in the shade the supposed literary talents of Mr Hilbery (editor of the *Critical Review*); this is one of several aspects of a particular family dynamic which serve to diminish (symbolically or actually) his authority as paterfamilias. The household revolves around 'ancestor worship' – the 'shrine' of the famous poet adjoins the drawing room, which also functions as a kind of literary salon where Mrs Hilbery shines as hostess. Katherine, however, finds her priestly duty (in the manner of an 'angel of the house') conducting guests to the shrine, to be as tedious as her duties as her mother's literary assistant. Oppressed as she is by a dead ancestor who 'intruded too much upon the present', hampered by her own 'inaptitude' and by the fitful brilliance and

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<sup>20</sup> Virginia and her Stephen siblings suffered by proxy from the monumental burden undertaken by their own father, Leslie Stephen, as first editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography* (DNB). Writing biographies celebrating masculine achievement was distinctly not, in the period, considered (at least by Stephen) to be a female undertaking: NB his exasperation at his first sister-in-law Anne Thackeray Ritchie's insufficiently serious contributions and wilful departures from his strict editorial rules for entries to the DNB (Broughton 1999, 75). On a different note, in *Night and Day* Mrs Hilbery's talents as a biographer are comically contrasted with Stephen's rigorous methods of selection and terse style in summarising great men's achievements for the DNB. However, both of these massive works – the unwritten biography of Richard Alardyce and Stephen's DNB – weigh oppressively on the lives of the wives and daughters who live under their shadow.

capricious inconsistency of her mother's temperament, Katherine's sense of duty is as much inspired by a moral need to justify her own social privilege, as by an obedient act of family homage. It was a duty 'they owed to the world ... for if they could not between them get this book accomplished they had no right to their privileged position. Their increment became yearly more and more unearned' (30). By demonstrating how the duty to create a public patriarchal record (a biography) burdens and subsumes domestic female lives, Woolf here seems to posit the biographical narrative form itself as patriarchal from a feminine authorial point of view. The values underlying such narratives are thus put into a distanced perspective: as both interrogable and oppressive.

In similar indirect fashion Woolf draws attention to fine distinctions of class, gender, income and capital in order to allocate position for her characters on a social scale. Thus the 'increment' of cultural capital earned by the Hilbery family's trading upon the poet's great name becomes a point of gendered class antagonism between Katherine and her suitor Ralph Denham (upper-middle class prestige *versus* lower-middle refusal of deference). Denham's opinion that '[t]he worship of greatness in the nineteenth century seems to explain ... the worthlessness of that generation' (12) is echoed by the upper-class Henry Otway's accusation that Alardyce was 'a fraud like the rest of them' (365) and chimes with Katherine's increasing impatience with the empty rituals of 'ancestor worship'. Such dissent from various fractions of the younger generation – lower-middle class, upper and upper-middle – suggests they all share an impatience with the rituals of deference inscribed in such patriarchal narratives. Although, as Katherine Mansfield suggested, Woolf's fine social distinctions in her second novel perhaps owe something to her deep understanding of Jane Austen's methods, I would argue that at least as much they look forward to a more explicitly ethnographic charting in her later work of class, gender and kinship distinctions. Indeed in some respects the careful plotting of Katherine's class, gender and kinship position and its economic and social implications looks forward to her own authorial self-positioning in *Three Guineas* as 'daughter of an educated man'.

Katherine's ambivalence about her family's standing and the value (earned or unearned) of her own privilege is taken up in the novel's subsequent interwoven discussion of the tenuous involvement of women of her class in the labour market, the extent to which female domestic responsibilities are acknowledged or valued as a contribution to the household economy, and her own complex negotiations with male suitors about acceptable terms and understandings within a marriage contract. In seeking to prise herself loose from the comforts and burdens of the 'profession' which her heritage has thrust upon her -- that of living at home as a dutiful daughter -- she is faced with choices which will define her position more or less conventionally in the 'profession' of marriage, or unconventionally -- if she were to follow the option demonstrated by Mary Datchet<sup>21</sup> -- of casting off her dependence and living alone as an independent professional woman. Again, these are questions regarding class, gender, kinship and social mobility which Woolf pursues more systematically and directly in later work: as in the debate over women writers' professional status and educated women's social mobility in *A Room of One's Own*; and the family saga of women's (and men's) upward (and downward) social mobility in *The Pargiters/The Years*.

As a distinguished literary editor and paterfamilias of a renowned literary family, Mr Hilbery takes for granted his daughter's domestic role as sole offspring. The novel's opening scenes highlight the unacknowledged but 'professional' nature of Katherine's capacities as deployed in the domestic sphere, and the narrator singles out her particular talent for selflessly promoting her mother's best qualities:

Katherine [...] was a member of a very great profession which has, as yet, no title and very little recognition, although the labour of mill and factory is, perhaps, no more severe and the results of less benefit to the world. She lived at home. She did it very well too. Any one coming to the house in Cheyne Walk felt that here was an orderly place, shapely, controlled -- a place where life had been trained to show to the best advantage, and, though composed of different elements, made to appear harmonious and with a character of its own. Perhaps it was the chief triumph of Katherine's art that Mrs Hilbery's character predominated. She and Mr Hilbery appeared to be a rich background for her mother's more striking qualities (33).

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<sup>21</sup> At one point in the text it is indicated that Mary Datchet is herself partly dependent upon a small annuity from inherited capital.

Her skills in managing rituals of polite hospitality for her parents' guests; her practised conduct of 'the ceremony of ancestor worship' (271) at her grandfather's literary shrine; her smooth management of the household and willingness to undertake irksome accounting tasks her father would rather not do himself -- all make of her a sophisticated version of the idealised Victorian 'angel of the house'. The impact of her independently wayward marriage choice upon the economic and emotional structure of the household is consequently large. However, it produces on the part of her father neither understanding nor acknowledgement of his daughter's material contribution to his wellbeing. Thwarted in his wishes both for a compliant, unthreatening, and aristocratically connected son-in-law, and for a well-appointed literary household built around patriarchal ancestor worship, the impasse of Katherine's broken engagement and the transfer of her affections excite only jealous rage in her father, and a wounded impotent retreat into the lair of his study.<sup>22</sup>

Woolf returns also to these themes of jealous fathers assuming rights of control over daughters and of marriage as trade between men: in great detail in the opening sections of *The Pargiters* and *The Years*; and with great force in the discussion (using biographical evidence) in the second chapter of *Three Guineas* regarding male infantile jealousy in Victorian father-daughter relationships.

Katherine's first fiancé, William Rodney, who wants only 'the wife of William Rodney' and not a thinking woman, is no threat to Mr Hilbery's authority and selfish desires; whereas Ralph Denham's claim on Katherine threatens to remove her entirely from her father's orbit, and is a direct challenge to his authority as patriarch. This is emphasised by the symbolism of Denham's twice sitting at the family dining table: first to partake of port and cigars after dinner in an act of homosocial bonding with Mr Hilbery (while Katherine is still safely engaged to Rodney); and secondly, in an act of symbolic usurpation, when he sits at the head of the table to facilitate the hurried re-negotiation of Katherine's transferred marital choice to himself. The marriage compact is revealed as an exchange between men. However, not as tradition would require it -- between father and suitor -- but

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<sup>22</sup> His rage might suggest Leslie Stephen's jealousy at Stella Duckworth's engagement to Jack Hills.



controversially, between suitor and suitor: Rodney and Denham himself. This contravention mirrors Katherine's earlier flagrant flouting of courtship protocol by secretly arranging for William to court Cassandra under cover of his continuing engagement to herself, thus freeing herself to test Ralph Denham's resolve.

Denham's claim is that of a lover and hard-working self-motivated man: he has the energy and resolve to make his own way in the 'procession' of male achievement largely on his own efforts, apparently unassisted by special privilege or exceptional homosocial advantage. His ambition is evident, given in the authorial description of a dedicated working life sustained by discipline and 'rather ostentatious efficiency' -- which, among his colleagues in his legal clerks' office, marks him out for advancement. A 'man of no means' but 'consumed with a desire to get on in the world' (104), he is confident in his ability to fulfil his 'vision of his own future':

He attributed to himself a strong brain, and conferred on himself a seat in the House of Commons at the age of fifty, a moderate fortune, and, with luck, an unimportant office in a Liberal Government (103).

Marriage to him will diminish Katherine's standing, for, though his family is middle-class, it is ranked lower in status than hers. Though he has begun to contribute articles on law to the journal of which her father is editor, socially Ralph Denham stands outside Katherine's social set, as a member of the respectable middle class living in peripheral Highgate at a significant social and geographical distance from the fashionable Chelsea of the Hilberys. In a prickly exchange on their second meeting he accuses her of a prejudice typical of her class: that of 'never talk[ing] seriously to their inferiors', although Katherine blandly assumes they are both indistinguishably 'middle class'. At the climax of the courtship drama he literally stands in vigil outside her house, silently demanding admission -- which he ultimately gains. This intricate triangular exchange is mirrored by several other triangular conflicts of passion, loyalty and dependency (those of Mary-Katherine-Ralph and William-Katherine-Cassandra), which make up the complex pattern of interlocking relationships in this novel's plot of female vocational choice. Marriage and its alternatives -- poorly paid but worthy professional work of a philanthropic or politically committed kind -

- are the avenues explored in the complex dance of trial and error, advance and retreat, and realignment with a new partner (or not), which is the informing pattern of this seemingly conventionally structured early novel.

Questions about the nature of Katherine's vocation in the domestic sphere are extended by a comedy of rivalry between Katherine and Mary Datchet, wherein it is revealed not only that they are rivals for the affections of Ralph Denham, but also potentially for the post of secretary to an about-to-be-established revolutionary society which Mary's radical friend, Mr Basnett, is in the process of setting up, with his eye on Mary for the post of secretary. Mr Basnett's speculative query to Katherine: 'Are you, by any chance, on the look-out for a job?', is met by Mary's defensive parry: 'Marriage is her job at present' (304). Katherine denies both claims at this stage, yet manages to leave open the possibility of at least becoming a member of the society at some future date, and to assert that she has a friendship with Ralph but no more. Katherine's prospects thus remain open and potentially various, but her eventual success over Mary as rival for Denham forecloses the hints of possibility that she might have chosen a professional occupation apart from marriage. Her intellectual love is for mathematics rather than the socialist 'scheme of life' proposed by Mary Datchet and Mr Basnett, and her emotional interest has already been provoked by Denham, so that the glimpse she gets of an original masculine completeness in Mr Basnett's 'youth and ardour' -- in which 'still speculative, still uncramped, one might imagine him the citizen of a nobler state than ours' -- distracts her only momentarily (304).<sup>23</sup>

For Mary Datchet, Ralph Denham is fancifully identified with the Classical Greek statue of Ulysses with whom she communes on visits to the British Museum. He is 'not in the least conventional like most clever men'; yet she invests him with heroic qualities of imperial

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<sup>23</sup> Mr Basnett, a 'very able' young graduate working to establish a society for the overthrow of capitalism through united working and middle class educative action, his youthful energy soon to be subsumed in clerical labour, plays a similar role for Katherine as the working class Jo Brooke does for Kitty Malone in *The Years* -- a fleeting exchange of looks and words hints at a future possibility of a politically and morally progressive masculinity and a more equal form of sexual relationship.

leadership – fantasy images which themselves are rather conventionalised.<sup>24</sup> Her hold over Denham, as the novel's marriage plots are played out, proves to be as unsubstantial as these fantasies of travel and adventure under his leadership. The triangle of rivalry between Katherine, Mary and Ralph is broken later when Mary selflessly relinquishes her prior claim, which Ralph is prepared still to honour. In this negotiation, Ralph the male suitor, is an object of exchange between women, unlike in the patriarchal marriage exchange between men, where a woman is the object of barter.<sup>25</sup> The terms of exchange are also very different – what is also bartered between Mary and Katherine are different kinds of female future: poorly paid socially responsible professional work or the 'profession' of marriage. There is a suggestion that the marriage option, which falls to Katherine, is ameliorated by Ralph's continuing political radicalisation, gained mainly through the influence of Mary.<sup>26</sup> Indeed both Katherine and Ralph remain inspired by Mary's example of independence and political commitment, symbolised by the light shining late into the night from the window of her apartment – 'a life of one's own' (286). This image obliquely reflects Woolf's own escape to Bloomsbury from the parental household, and prefigures the debate about gendered space in *A Room of One's Own*.

Thus in Woolf's second novel, the drama of what has been seen to be a somewhat conventional marriage plot is played out. Woolf was piqued by a review of her novel by Katherine Mansfield (both an acquaintance and an artistic rival), which expressed surprise that the novel seemed to invite comparison with Jane Austen's work: 'A decorous elderly dullard she describes me; Jane Austen up to date' (D1, 314).<sup>27</sup> While Mansfield's review accurately emphasises the novel's conventionality and the surface brilliance of its intricate

<sup>24</sup> It could be suggested that Mary's fantasies are fed by the crude ideology of patriotism and imperial adventure purveyed in currently popular 'Boys Own' adventure literature (cf. Mackenzie 1984).

<sup>25</sup> Analysis by Sedgwick (1985) of the homosocial spectrum and triangular exchanges which take place to the detriment of women in such novels as Eliot's *The Mill and the Floss* and Dickens's *Edwin Drood* provide a useful model for analysing Woolf's treatment of 'marriage as trade'.

<sup>26</sup> Cuddy-Keane (2003) sees Denham's project to write the history of a Saxon village as an indication of his potential as a dialogical and socialist-inclined writer and historian, in a mould distinctly approved of by Woolf.

<sup>27</sup> In letters to John Middleton Murry, Mansfield was 'less reserved in her judgement', and 'called the novel "a lie in the soul" because it was written as if World War 1 had not taken place'. Hussey 1995, 189.

denouement, it does not hint at ways in which these very features may be deliberately exaggerated in order to undermine convention and to turn a comedy of manners into a commentary on social roles under pressure of change, as some more recent critics have suggested. Jane Wheare discusses the 'external viewpoint' created by Woolf's dramatic techniques, while Michael Whitworth sees *Night and Day* as an 'anti-novel, parodying the conventions of romance just as *Jacob's Room* parodies those of the *Bildungsroman*'. In Whitworth's reading, characters like Katherine and Ralph, whose discomfort and self-consciousness show that they are not fully in or committed to the roles in which they find themselves, represent versions of a new modernist self-consciousness which is at odds with the codes of the genre in which they appear to be trapped -- by placing sceptical rationalists in a genre that requires spontaneous passionate types, Woolf undermines the genre's central assumptions.<sup>28</sup> Given its title, duality is 'a crucial theme' in the novel, as is evident in the ambivalence and detachment displayed by several characters towards the 'professions' of both marriage and work, and in Katherine's 'double consciousness in relation to love'. She is a 'double-motivated' woman whose consciousness is divided by the emotional and financial considerations opened up when marriage is a trade.<sup>29</sup>

Whitworth (2005, 157) sees Woolf's focus on such characters' self-consciousness as producing something like Brecht's 'alienation effect' -- in that spectators/readers are reminded that an illusion is being created, 'so allowing them to think critically about the events portrayed'. The point can perhaps be taken further to suggest that Woolf's emphasis upon this disjuncture not only points up tensions and distance between tradition and innovation, old and new consciousness, conventional role and self-conscious performance, but that the rituals and protocols of conventional courtship are themselves presented as patterned, socially conditioned behaviour -- as in a dance, or as patterned language -- as in metrical verse. My argument is that Woolf makes play with both literary conventions and conventions of music and dance to produce an underlying critique of

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<sup>28</sup> Whitworth 2005, 157.

<sup>29</sup> Whitworth draws in this discussion on Hamilton, C. 1909. *Marriage as a Trade*, London: Chapman and Hall.

social conventions. Thus William Rodney's 'mastery of metre' is matched by his excessive conformity to codes of social behaviour -- his performance of rule-bound masculinity as suitor to Katherine is as much a parody of gentlemanly behaviour constrained by the rules of etiquette as his obsession with the measures of Elizabethan verse is a parody of literary scholarship and performance. His release from the onerous business of loving Katherine allows him to indulge in the delights of writing courtly missives to Cassandra:

He found it particularly delightful to shape a style which should express the bowing and curtsying, advancing and retreating, which are characteristic of one of the many million partnerships of men and women. Katherine never trod that particular measure, he could not help reflecting (270).

Use of conventions of dance, music and opera in the elaborate choreography of the masque-like denouement of the marriage plot, makes the game of concealment and revelation and its dance of reversal and realignment, take on the appearance of learned behaviour performed according to a social script.<sup>30</sup> Compliance with, or strategic contravention of the rules and rituals of courtship, positions characters as active or passive actors in the territory of negotiation between genders and between generations where these tensions are played out. The trope of the dance serves to put the game of conventional courtship into perspective: either as an outmoded mire of misunderstanding (from the self-conscious, forward-looking perspective of Katherine and Ralph); or as a delightful formal game of advance and retreat (from the insistently playful and traditionalist perspective of William and Cassandra).

Woolf makes more overt use of the trope of dance in both *The Voyage Out* and *The Years*. At the end of the formal dance at the hotel in *The Voyage Out* Rachel takes over after the departure of the dance band, and creates on the piano an informal, free-form kind of music which liberates the late-night revellers from conventional measures and de-inhibits their styles of dance. The scene is an early demonstration of Rachel's ability to stand apart from a social world as if in a world of her own. Here her private world is

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<sup>30</sup> cf Davidoff's discussion of servants' role in upholding 'status theatre' -- 'the analogy between a theatrical performance and society functions is very strong' (1973, 88).

shared; as the novel progresses she inhabits an increasingly isolated inner world. Two scenes in *The Years* also feature dance as a kind of commentary on social behaviour.<sup>31</sup> In the '1907' episode, Sara, unable to sleep on a hot summer night, reads Edward Pargiter's translation of *Antigone*, as the sounds of a dance, popular songs and dance tunes interspersed with the couples' exchanges intrude on her reverie. Her reading is interwoven with the wandering thoughts of her dream-like state and juxtaposes Antigone's living entombment and ostracised kinship status with her own alienation from 'the procession' of courtship and marriage. In the final scene of *The Years* an all-night dance reunites family members, friends and acquaintances, taking them into the dawn light of what has become a new era. Jane Austen's *Emma* is recalled by Nicholas's invitation to Sara to dance. 'Shall I dance with you?' The dance of Nicholas, who is identified as homosexual, with Sara (about whom her cousin North reflects that she 'has never attracted the love of men. Or had she?' (317) disrupts the ordered pattern of gendered behaviour as established in the authentically conventional conclusion to the marriage plot of Austen's *Emma*, when Mr Knightley finally invites Emma to dance.

The trope of dance takes its place in Woolf's repertoire of techniques of de-familiarisation, putting shifting patterns of social behaviour into perspective, and revealing unexpected realignment in relations of gender and power. In the early *Night and Day*, the trope highlights commitment to or ambivalence about the performance of traditional social and gender roles (including masculinity) played out by conforming or dissenting members of a younger generation. Dissenters subvert conventions while conformists seek to uphold them. In the late work, *The Years*, the final dance scene lasts all night and inaugurates a new era, its revelry creating an intoxicating de-inhibited atmosphere in which new openness between characters (of both sexes and of different generations) seems possible. As family members and friends re-convene, many after long absence, they find both change and continuity in their mutual relations. North Pargiter, another returned

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<sup>31</sup> Bourdieu (1990, 67) refers to a dance scene in 'one of Woolf's novels' in which absurd, ritualised movements of couples in a dance are glimpsed through a window.

colonial,<sup>32</sup> casts an observing, quizzical, outsider's eye upon the new post-imperial metropolitan scene, in counterpoint to the long female inside perspective of Eleanor upon the family's shifting fortunes. Eleanor too, recently returned from a trip to India, has a newly detached perspective. Steps and measures of a familiar dance figure not as conventionalised patters of behaviour as in the earlier novel, but provide a context for conversational encounters and affective exchange between characters attempting to come to terms with individual and historical change. Such change in perspective and method in Woolf's later fiction and in her methods is built upon the innovations in her novels of the 1920s. Her excursion in *To The Lighthouse* into Freudian territory, making use of sea- and landscape (in the manner of the Brontës)<sup>33</sup> as dramaturgical setting for the psychological conflict of one family's struggle over generational succession (coincident with the First World War), is one such innovation.

##### **5) To The Lighthouse (1927)**

*To The Lighthouse* was recognised from the outset as a work of remarkable accomplishment, particularly for its acute insight into the psychological drama of family life, of relations between men and women, and parents and children. Erich Auerbach (1946) famously singled out the opening scene as emblematically displaying modernism's path-breaking and paradigm-shifting techniques in the 'multipersonal representation of consciousness, in the 'elaboration of the contrast between "exterior" and "interior" time', and in indicating how 'a common life of mankind on earth' might be made 'concretely visible now in the unprejudiced, precise, interior and exterior representation of the random moment in the lives of different people'.<sup>34</sup> Half a century later, in 1998, Pierre Bourdieu also singled the novel out (like Auerbach he also focused particularly on the opening scene) as an extraordinarily lucid account of the fragile construct which is masculinity, and of the intricate interdependencies which are acted out between men and women, while,

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<sup>32</sup> cf Peter Walsh in *Mrs Dalloway*.

<sup>33</sup> See Chapter Six for discussion of *The Common Reader* as methodological preparation for Woolf's 1920s novels.

<sup>34</sup> 'The Brown Stocking' in Auerbach 2005, 538, 552.

according to the conventions of their era and social milieu, they fulfil socially ascribed roles as masculine and feminine persons: husbands and wives, parents and children.

[I]n the background to this narrative one finds an incomparably lucid evocation of the female gaze, which is itself particularly lucid on the desperate, and in its triumphant unawareness somewhat tragic, effort that every man must make to rise to his own childhood conception of manhood.<sup>35</sup>

In the fifty or so years which divide these two magisterial commentaries very significant developments took place in the fields of literary criticism and the sociology of gender.

While Auerbach helped to secure Woolf's reputation as a key exponent of high modernist style, Bourdieu had the advantage of writing after British and American second wave feminism had transformed Woolf studies and had created the conditions for the burgeoning of gender studies. Bourdieu's account of Woolf's unknowing contribution to the latter (especially in the section titled 'The female vision of the male vision') seems in effect to mark her out as an anthropologist of gender *avant la lettre*. However, his justification for making use of her fiction to contrast and illustrate continuities between structural aspects of gender relations among 'the highland peasants of Kabilye' and 'the upper-class denizens of Bloomsbury' emphasises the acuity of her vision and the exceptional quality of her writing in producing what she herself called the 'truth of fiction', rather than any significant theoretical value in her contribution.

Noel Annan's comment that '*To The Lighthouse* is not so much "about" her parents as about what to do with them, how to think them through or 'think through' them',<sup>36</sup> indicates how the novel both stands apart from the other novels and is integrally part of the continuing process of innovation in style and method which unites them. The theme of masculinity in crisis is one aspect of this continuity, and echoes of this impending, but never quite realised disaster resonate through all the novels, including the three examined in this chapter. Thus, amongst several cameo portraits of masculine performance caught in a glittering moment of achievement in *The Years* before the masculine 'procession' is engulfed and obliterated by the passage of time, in the 1891 episode, a glimpse is given

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<sup>35</sup> Bourdieu, 2001, 69.

<sup>36</sup> 1984, 80.



of Morris performing impeccably his public role as a barrister in court. Seen through the admiring eyes of his wife and Eleanor, (his sister had advocated with their father to allow him to study Law), his public self is assured ('the wig squared his forehead, and gave him a framed look, like a picture. Never had she seen him to such advantage; with such a brow; with such a nose' (89)). Eleanor is impressed and relieved to see her younger brother acquit himself well ("How well he did that!" she whispered") as he calmly responds to a query from the judge. The whole performance of the court is however ironically deflated, and the formidable authority of 'old Curry' the judge (whom Eleanor knows socially, having recently been a dinner guest at his house) obliquely called into question, when Eleanor recalls Curry proudly showing her his collection of antique furniture -- some of which is evidently fake. Eleanor's concern for her younger brother and her relief that his public performance is convincing draws attention to performative aspects of the public masculine role -- the small boy has learned his lessons and acquits himself well; his wig allows him to look his part -- the 'picture' of a barrister. But Eleanor's inside knowledge of his private self, and her memory of him as a child, serve to reveal the child within the man, and the man performing an ascribed role.

A reversal of this revelation -- a picture of the public man that a child will become -- occurs in the first scene of *To The Lighthouse* as Mrs Ramsay imagines her son James, frowning with concentration as he cuts out an image from a catalogue, as destined for a future role as a presiding public man:

he appeared the image of stark and uncompromising severity, with his high forehead and his fierce blue eyes, impeccably candid and pure, frowning slightly at the sight of human frailty, so that his mother, watching him guide his scissors neatly round the refrigerator, imagined him all red and ermine on the bench or directing a stern and momentous enterprise in some crisis of public affairs (5-6).

James's place in the procession seems assured, sanctioned as it is by Mrs Ramsay's vision and by her specialised capacity for sustaining masculine endeavours:

she had the whole of the other sex under her protection; for reasons she could not explain, for their chivalry and valour, for the fact that they negotiated treaties, ruled India, controlled finance; finally, for an attitude towards herself which no woman could fail to feel or to find agreeable, something trustful, childlike, reverential (8).

Mrs Ramsay's attentions to her son presage recurring scenes of oedipal conflict with his father -- a conflict charged not only with competition for her sympathy and attention, but sharpened by the fact that Mr Ramsay is at the end of his progress in the procession while James is at the beginning of his. The strength of James's position is not only that at his age his rightful place is at his mother's side, but also that because his destiny at this moment is all promise his claim to the masculine ideal is virtually unassailable. His father's position, on the other hand, is pathologically unstable and swings between a sense of assured superiority and an abject and violent need for his wife's sympathy. Mr Ramsay deprecates his own relative success in professional life 'because he had not done the thing he might have done. It was a disguise; it was the refuge of a man afraid to own his own feelings, who could not say, This is what I like -- this is what I am' (53). His performance is 'rather pitiable and distasteful to William Bankes and Lily Briscoe, who wondered why such concealments should be necessary; why he always needed praise; why so brave a man in thought should be so timid in life; how strangely he was venerable and laughable at one and the same time' (53).<sup>37</sup> Because his evident achievements do not sustain his self-esteem, Ramsay not only exacts sympathy from his wife, but goes so far as to hold her (or the fact of his marriage) responsible for his failure. Mrs Ramsay's supply of sympathy and understanding encompasses even this injustice: 'She guessed what he was thinking -- he would have written better books if he had not married' (81).

Bankes, former walking companion of Ramsay when he was young and single, is alive to his friend's faults and regrets the change that marriage brought about -- the end of an intense homosocial companionship and the cumbrous burden that domesticity entails. Bankes cannot imagine how the Ramsays manage (not being rich) -- 'To feed eight children on philosophy!' His friend's turning from the heroic path of lone scholarship to 'divest himself of all those glories of isolation and austerity which crowned him in youth' is an error of judgement, an act of disloyalty to an unspoken compact between them which

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<sup>37</sup> Chapter Two of Gordon's biography (2006) focuses on Virginia's relationship with her father, 'The Most Lovable of Men', Leslie Stephen. Gordon quotes Stephen's own assessment of his life's achievement in a letter to his wife: 'I have only done well enough to show that I might have done better' (letter to Julia, 1893); Gordon concludes: 'The prime reason for Leslie Stephen's overbearing exactions of sympathy was his sense of failure' (27).

destroyed the living heart of their friendship, leaving only its husk. He is critical too of Ramsay's need for acknowledgement and praise, astonished that 'a man of his intellect could stoop so low [...] could depend so much upon people's praise' (27). However, he acknowledges some of the attractions of family life, recognising that he himself, no longer young, 'childless and a widower', is 'dried and shrunk' -- an outcome also not envisaged in the homosocial seclusion in which their youthful dreams of glory were nurtured. In addition, he enjoys his friends' generous hospitality and, blind to the mechanisms which sustain masculine privilege, takes Mrs Ramsay's ministrations for granted.

While in *A Room Of One's Own* Woolf describes the reserved masculine space where Oxbridge education takes place, as a sound-proofed and 'miraculous glass cabinet' which contains the body in a place where 'the mind is freed from contact with the facts', where 'the roughness of the present is smoothed away' (6), in *To The Lighthouse* the higher reaches of a mature man's academic achievement, and Ramsay's not inconsiderable contributions to philosophy in particular, are described through a different set of metaphors linking lonely endeavour and endurance in harsh mountains and bleak seascapes.<sup>38</sup> Thus Ramsay, at his best, has the power 'suddenly to shed all superfluities, to shrink and diminish so that he looked barer and felt sparer, even physically, yet lost none of his intensity of mind, and so stand on his little ledge facing the dark of human ignorance, how we know nothing and the sea eats away the ground we stand on -- that was his fate, his gift. [...] [H]e kept even in that desolation a vigilance which spared no phantom and luxuriated in no vision'. In this guise he inspires in his admirers -- Banks (intermittently); Tansley (obsequiously) and his wife (now) -- 'profound reverence ... pity, and gratitude too' for his lonely and dutiful philosophical fortitude in marking out, 'as a stake driven into the bed of a channel' in the dangerous waters of life, a bearing for others to navigate by (51-2).

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<sup>38</sup> cf Leslie Stephen's physical exploits.

At his best, Ramsay is inspirational, differently so for his wife and his male admirers; at his worst, his behaviour and the psychoanalytically revealed transparency of his exposed needs are appalling. Mrs Ramsay pities him, as 'she pitied men always as if they lacked something' (98). Abject in his periodic feelings of failure, his needs are basically twofold, simple and fundamental: 'to be assured of his genius' and 'to be taken within the circle of life'. But the naked transparency of his emotional needs is shocking to onlookers and increasingly embarrassing for his wife; and his infantile manner of demanding and taking his wife's life-giving pity and sympathy is savage, rapacious, frankly exposing the abandoned and lonely child within the man -- 'into this delicious fecundity, this fountain and spray of life, the fatal sterility of the male plunged itself, like a beak of brass, barren and bare. He wanted sympathy. He was a failure, he said' (44). His habit of reciting poetry aloud (here Tennyson's *The Charge of the Light Brigade*), of talking to himself and revealing his inner feelings to intimates and outsiders alike becomes more marked and 'awkward' as he ages. It is of course part of the success of Woolf's technique that the reader, as well as strategically placed characters in the fiction of the novel, should 'overhear' some of the secrets within Mr Ramsay's unconscious mind, the thinking that makes him the man that he is. As Auerbach pointed out, in this 'multipersonal representation of consciousness' the question of who is speaking, and to whom, and who hears what, is immediately posed in the act of reading.

Woolf's technique of psychoanalytical exposure of the roots of masculine insecurity to foreground Ramsay's unconscious oedipal urges as part of his conscious behaviour is widely acknowledged as an unsurpassed and ground-breaking feat in modernist fiction. It invites from Bourdieu a sociological account of combative masculine posturing, normative paternal certainties and academic pretensions. In Bourdieu's reading, Mr Ramsay's behaviour is the expression of an infantile need to be granted 'a kind of tender attention and confident comprehension, which *also* generate a profound security' (78). Both James and his father need Mrs Ramsay's 'emotional protection' from the 'pitiless verdict/the unbearable negativity of the real' (76), but it is the father -- 'a man whose words are

verdicts' and 'whose predictions are self-fulfilling' -- who has insisted that 'there is no choice but silent acceptance of the inevitability of things' (71); leading Bourdieu to conclude that 'the executioner is also a victim, and that the word of the father is liable, because of its very power, to convert the probable into destiny' (73). Overheard by Bankes and Lily reciting lines from Tennyson's poem, Ramsay -- caught behaving like a child -- reveals 'the fantasies of the *libido academica* which express themselves in warlike games' (73). Dwelling on his sense of failure ('He had not genius; he laid no claim to that' -- in the field of philosophy 'Z is only reached by one man in a generation', and he knows his limitations: 'He would never reach R' (40, 41)) he salves his wounded pride with fantasies of dying at his post, a heroic leader of a doomed expedition, 'the fine figure of a soldier' (42). These compensatory gestures express, in Bourdieu's view, something that is constitutive of masculinity (the original *ilusio* at the basis of the *libido dominandi*):

It is what causes men (as opposed to women) to be socially instituted and instructed in such a way that they let themselves be caught up, like children, in all the games that are socially assigned to them, of which the form par excellence is war (2001, 75).

Bourdieu suggests that the 'visceral investment' which men feel obliged to make in the *ilusio* of such games 'is performed through poses, positions or gestures' -- such poses of uprightness and rectitude as those adopted here by Mr Ramsay in his desire, despite the wreck of his hopes, at least to 'die standing'.

## **6) The Years (1937)**

Woolf captures the poses, postures and gestures of masculine performance in numerous scenes in her writing, scenes which are usually framed and focused by means of a critical (and female) observer. Further acts of Mr Ramsay's self-dramatisation as a desolate widower convince neither Lily Briscoe ('he was acting, she felt, this great man was dramatising himself' (172)) nor his daughter Cam:

Sitting in the boat he bowed, he crouched himself, acting instantly his part -- the part of a desolate man, widowed, bereft; and so called up before him in hosts

people sympathising with him; staged for himself as he sat in the boat, a little drama (TTL 189).

Similarly, in *The Years*, Delia is not convinced by, and silently condemns, her father's expression of grief at his wife's death:

'Rose!' he cried. 'Rose! Rose!' He held his arms with the fists clenched out in front of him.  
You did that very well, Delia told him as he passed her. It was like a scene in a play (TY 39).<sup>39</sup>

Postures of grief at the funeral are equally hypocritical, in Delia's eyes:

As for her father he was so stiff and so rigid that she had a convulsive desire to laugh aloud. Nobody can feel like that, she thought. He's over doing it. None of us feel anything at all, she thought: we're all pretending (72).

As in Bourdieu's sociology of social games, ascribed gender roles and learned behaviour, Woolf makes use in her depiction and characterisation of men in particular of the trappings of drama, masks and the game-like nature/ ludic quality of social behaviour. Masks are worn by men more practised at seamless deception than Mr Ramsay, and in more brutal fields of achievement than that of his beloved philosophy. After Kitty's dinner party in the 1914 section of *The Years* the women play at 'battledore and shuttlecock talk, to be kept going until the door opened and the gentlemen came in' (209). During the dinner itself, as Martin observes:

a distinguished old man at the end of the table ... had let down a mask of infinitely wise tolerance over his face. ... He was arranging three crusts of bread by the side of his plate as if he were playing a mysterious little game of profound significance. 'So,' he seemed to be saying. 'So,' as if they were fragments of human destiny, not crusts, that he held in his fingers. The mask might conceal anything – or nothing? Anyhow it was a mask of great distinction. [...]  
'When I was in Ireland,' he began, 'in 1880 ...' He spoke very simply; he was offering them a memory; he told his story perfectly; it held its meaning without spilling a single drop. And he had played a great part.

In this cameo scene, masculine eminence and power deploy mere gesture to claim faultless and historically significant individual achievement. This is not a Mr Ramsay

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<sup>39</sup> Gordon (2006, 32-3) records Virginia Stephen's account of herself, aged thirteen -- she 'stretched out her arms to this man as he came stumbling from Julia's deathbed but he brushed impatiently past'; and comments: 'This scene, imprinted for life on her memory, is emblematic of the emotional impasse which was to persist in their relations from 1895 until Leslie Stephen's death in 1904'.

under scrutiny, but inscrutable male power entirely inured, it would seem, to any uncertainty. Unusually, in Woolf's writing, the observer is male, the cynically detached Martin, Captain Pargiter. As the years unfold and as a new generation takes stock of a new world order younger men as well as women seek new ways to act out their parts, while the certainties of imperialism, of inscrutable power play, of great parts played by men on the world stage, pass into memory by means of a perfectly told dinner table story. As the late Victorian world of her parent's generation recedes, Woolf can mark its passing through the critical male gaze of a fictional contemporary. In later episodes of the novel the succeeding generation will complete this process of detachment from the ever more distanced world of her childhood. At the end of the dinner party the aged Lady Warburton departs,

hung about with chains; her fingers knobbed with rings. Her sharp stone-coloured face, riddled with lines and wrinkled into creases, looked out from its soft nest of fur and laces. The eyes were still bright.

The nineteenth century going to bed, Martin said to himself as he watched her hobble down the steps on the arm of her footman (215).

Elsewhere, in attempting to capture the effect of historical change on human memory, Woolf uses the yardstick of a period of fifty years to measure the extent or absence of social and cultural change, to assess, as it were, the endurance of a particular ideological formation. Although *The Years* spans a period of fifty years, the later episodes only hint at the transformative nature (in human terms) of historical change. Earlier, however, in *The Pargiters* draft, she had attempted to address more concretely the question of potential change in class and gender relations. The episode of Kitty Malone's tea-time visit to the working-class home of the Brook family causes her to reflect on distinctions of behaviour and attitude between 'all those grades of society that lie between the working class and the upper class', and on whether gender norms are fixed or subject to change. Kitty, the socially trained but formally uneducated daughter of a highly educated man, the Master of St Katherine's College at Oxford, concludes that 'right and wrong had been decided many years ago by universal consent; that the standards and ideals of the year 1880 would continue more or less for ever' (*The Pargiters*, 151), but following her brief glimpse into the life of another class, she comes to recognise that 'proportions were not the same in

different places', that '[m]uch depends upon training and circumstances'. Evidence of unchanging certainty in standards of behaviour between men and women ('that the laws of conduct were fixed') is to be found (by the narrator) in the Oxford English Dictionary, published more than fifty years later in 1929, which still defines 'womanliness' as consisting of 'modesty, compassion, tact etc', and 'manliness' as referring to 'men's virtues, courage, frankness etc' (152).

Yet Kitty has been struck by the attractiveness of Jo Brook, the son, with whom a single exchange of looks is enough to demonstrate his startling difference from the 'rowing men, reading men, sporting men, Eton Winchester & Harrow men', whom she must dutifully entertain in the drawing room of the Master's Lodge. Courtship and love, in her set, do not involve the promise of 'the sulky respectful honest look' which Jo gives her. Eventually and dutifully, she accedes to her mother's marital preference for her and marries a lord. However, much later in her life, as recorded in the 1910 section of *The Years*, while at the opera watching and hearing Siegfried hammering and restoring the symbolic sword he has inherited from his father, she remembers her lost opportunity:

when she was very young. In Oxford? She had gone to tea with them; had sat on a hard chair; in a very light room; and there was a sound of hammering in the garden. And then a boy came in with shavings in his hair. And she had wanted him to kiss her (TY 148).

Eleanor in *The Years* is also given cause, later in life, to reflect on marital choice and the kind of man with whom a 'real relationship' might have been attained. The meagreness of choice available to her as a young ('odd'?) woman is indicated by her not having acted on a hint that William Whatney ('old Dubbin') had once admired her eyes. She later meets him as 'Sir' William (for services in India):

He was talking. She listened. He seemed too big for the quiet, English dining room; his voice boomed out. He wanted an audience. [...] She had the feeling she would hear a great many more stories that sailed serenely to his own advantage, during the weekend (163).

Apart from the wreck of this chance ('the grisled crumpled red-and-yellow face of the boy she had known'), no spark of possibility for marriageability in men is recorded in the



chronicle until she meets Renny, the husband of her cousin Magdalena (Maggie), during the dinner in 1917 which is interrupted by an air-raid – 'He is very rude and at the same time very polite. [...] A man who feels many different things, and all passionately, all at the same time, she thought ...' (241). Renny's angry pacifism, his informed rationalism, his avid reading of newspapers 'while other people try to kill each other above my head' impress Eleanor as much as his happy marriage to Maggie. Twenty years too late – 'That is the man, she said to herself, with a sudden rush of conviction, as she came out into the frosty air, that I should like to have married' (241). A post-Great War generation of men not stamped in the hegemonic English mode of masculinity perhaps offers new possibilities outside the destructive gender paradigm of egotistical domination and self-denying submission.

In Woolf's fictional constructions of gender relations, the representation of men is generally filtered through a distancing perspective, whether that of author/narrator or of a (usually female) character as observer. Thus male characters are generally brought into critical perspective through the appraising eyes of women, a perspective which simultaneously questions as it observes and records. Leaska (1978) argues that the novel-essay format of *The Pargiters* (later re-cast and re-written as *The Years* and *Three Guineas*) was designed to bring into creative tension an 'antagonism' (felt by Woolf) between *fact* and *fiction*, and bring into play more explicitly within the imaginative scope of fiction the analytical perspective of the overtly political/historical essay.<sup>40</sup> Snaith (2000), however, suggests that fact-fiction opposition in Woolf's work has tended to be overstated, that the text of *The Years* is 'layered and palimpsestic rather than generically antagonistic' (94), and that Woolf's decision to revise the original format of *The Pargiters* was 'motivated by a reluctance to mix genres, not a rejection of the fact/fiction conjunction' (95). Snaith argues that Woolf's original conception of a sequel to *A Room of One's Own* recounting the sexual and professional lives of women from 1880 to 'The Present Day' still shapes *The Years*, continuing and extending Woolf's project of bringing to light women's

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<sup>40</sup> Leaska (1978) *The Pargiters* Introduction xvi, xx.

occluded history: the novel follows the lives of seven women charting historical change and 'its effect on the women's freedom in terms of employment, education and sexuality' (92). Snaith suggests that in *The Years* the external, overtly analytical perspective of the 'Essay' sections of *The Pargiters* is progressively integrated through revision, cutting, addition and substitution: '[i]nstead of direct analysis, the fact and fiction become intertwined and interwoven' (95). Arguably, as part of the same process of revision and integration (as described by Snaith), it would seem that a single, authorial critical perspective on masculinity is also replaced by a multiplicity of perspectives (predominantly female, but with the significant addition of certain dissenting, or at least questioning, male perspectives). Two of the latter are evident in the enquiring viewpoint of the returned colonial, North Pargiter, and in the scepticism of the foreign Nicholas.

In contrast to the writerly play with conventions of gendered behaviour in *Night and Day*, and the new psychoanalytically informed techniques of *To The Lighthouse*, Woolf had begun by the 1930s to experiment with representing the unstable dynamics of gender relations in the bourgeois family through a combined fictional and historical account of one family's evolution from the 1880s to the late 1930s. As depicted in *The Pargiters* draft and its revised version in *The Years*, changing patterns of social behaviour, new pressures and tensions in the domestic sphere are reflected in collective and individual experience across generations within several branches of the Pargiter family. Woolf's autoethnographic account of bourgeois/patriarchal family dynamics represents paternal authority as exerted by means of two agencies of leverage and conditioning: love and money. Shaped by opposing forces within the hierarchy of a patriarchal household, the domestic economy of love and money is subject to paternal control but only insofar as the head of the household can exert it. In successive episodes throughout *The Years* patriarchal order is revealed as inherently unstable, and – if not bolstered by an impossible return to the old patterns – palpably disintegrating. Although Woolf's attempt to fictionalise the political and emotional economy of the English middle-class household proved to be unworkable in the format which she originally planned both texts show how

these 'subterranean' agencies constitute the base of the authority of the paterfamilias and also provoke rivalry and dissent among household members.

Negotiation over money determines much interaction in the London house at Abercorn Terrace, and 'love was, of course, the other power that lay beneath the surface of the Pargiter family and helped to control their lives'.<sup>41</sup> These intricately and destructively intertwined agencies, which underlie the economy of money and love in the household, produce in the opening scenes of *The Years* a tensely wrought atmosphere of guilt, concealment, resentment, rivalry, surveillance and subterfuge. While Colonel Pargiter's bullying style of control is military; in the related household in Oxford the mode is academic. Kitty Malone, cousin of Edward Pargiter, performs for her father, the Master of an Oxford College, and for her mother as academic hostess, a role not dissimilar to that of Katherine Hilbery in *Night and Day's* literary Chelsea. 'The Lodge was based on money, running subterraneously, out of sight. Love was also present, though that suffered many restrictions, and was concealed under many disguises' (TP 108). Colonel Pargiter rules by inducing guilt and by careful apportioning of approval and finance; yet in the opening scene of the novel he makes moves which cast doubt on his manly rectitude. In a mood of weary alienation, brooding on the implications of his wife's illness and impending death, he leaves his peers at his Club (the 'old Empire men')<sup>42</sup> to their reminiscing, to make a furtive visit to his mistress on his way home. His moral authority undermined from the inside, his wife dying in an upper room, his cowed children locked as ever in semi-concealed sibling rivalry, he returns to his family. His resort to bullying, divisive tactics only reveal further divisions and the rank unfairness of his mechanisms of control over still unmarried daughters and still unqualified sons. The narrative standpoint for the scene of the Colonel's return is that of Eleanor, his eldest daughter and manager of the household. Through her watchful eyes an incisive accounting is given of the burdens of affect and strains of dissonance which freight this scene; it is also revealed how her deputed role wears her down.

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<sup>41</sup> *The Pargiters*, Leaska, ed, 1978, 32.

<sup>42</sup> Esty 2004, 88.

Eleanor's perspective as scrutinising chronicler of the family's shifting fortunes provides continuity as the episodes reflect change, fragmentation, and finally a hint of renewal. 'Pargiter of Pargiter's Horse', the sobriquet/mnemonic that Eleanor recalls in a late episode, stands for the family's (once achieved; now unobtainable) ideal type of military, imperial masculinity – to which, in the early episodes, the aging Colonel still aspires and pretends to fulfill.<sup>43</sup> In Eleanor's estimation in 1908, when she meets both Martin and Rose together again, it is Rose and not Martin who should have been a soldier: 'She ought to have been the soldier, Eleanor thought. She was exactly like the picture of old Uncle Pargiter of Pargiter's Horse' (TY 127). The irony of this reversal is magnified by Rose's childhood experience (recounted in the first episode) of an unsanctioned, twilight expedition alone to the local shop. To give herself courage she fantasises herself on a heroic military mission – 'Pargiter of Pargiter's Horse [...] riding to the rescue!' (24). She is twice accosted by a sexual predator, a terrifying encounter which visits her in dreams and stays with her for life. She is unable to explain her subsequent horror and inexplicable sense of guilt to the concerned Eleanor.<sup>44</sup> In thus recalling the bold spirit of adventure and freedom which put Rose in danger of being molested as a child, Eleanor's reflections put her battle scars in new historical perspective. They become markers of heroic activism in women's struggles for rights and political representation (in the 1908 scene Rose has a scratch on her chin, having had a stone thrown at her as a speaker at a by-election meeting in Northumberland). Woolf's indirect and allusive treatment of Rose's frontline activism connects the dangers of street love outside the house in Abercorn Terrace with the battle lines of imperial military adventure, and with symbolic breaches made by the suffragettes in the gendered boundaries of the domestic and public spheres. The juxtaposition equates (replaces?) jaded 'Boys' Own' adventure with female militancy, hinting at a changed/changing dispensation. A further rhetorical effect is that Eleanor's reappraisal of Rose not only puts Martin's rather colourless career as Army Captain-

<sup>43</sup> The lost eminence and authority of the great ancestor, Richard Alardyce, in *Night and Day*, is similarly no longer reproducible in the present.

<sup>44</sup> The incident recalls the sexual abuse suffered by Virginia Stephen as a child at the hands of her step-brothers, and Rachel Vinrace's nightmares, brought on by Richard Dalloway's kiss, in *The Voyage Out*.

turned-businessman into the shade, but also retrospectively undermines the dutiful honour and affection in which she has held her father. War-wounded (having lost two fingers in the Indian Revolt of 1857), in the first scene she watches him fumbling in his pocket to extract change with which to reward his children: she 'worshipped her father for his courage; and yet the sight of the shriveled hand made her feel rather sick (TP 14).<sup>45</sup>

The Colonel's military bearing, his honour, his bullying and guilt-inducing manner in enforcing discipline in the house, his moral, actual and remembered authority: all are undermined by means of an accumulation throughout the novel of detailed points of irony, contradiction and psychic tension. Stylistic accentuation of these features produces (as in these examples) ironic reversal, re-appraisal and thus an undermining of seemingly established certainties. Such devices work with Woolf's autoethnographic techniques of defamiliarisation and objectification to create distance between narrative observation (authorial narration or free indirect discourse) and the object of scrutiny. Thus in the opening scenes Woolf's method creates dissonance and exposes to critical scrutiny both the pretensions of the Colonel to moral authority and his private system of domination. The money he gives to Mira, his mistress, goes toward her laundry bills -- a coincidence whose import is echoed in his own household by seemingly inconsequential conversational allusion to dirty linen and the costs of laundry.

The draft of *The Pargiters* demonstrates the working of the emotional/monetary economy in more detail than does the truncated version of the chronicle published in 1937 as *The Years*. For example, the pressing need to balance a household budget required to cover the costs of three daughters of marriageable age and of three sons (one riskily embarking on a career in law; the younger two with expensive costs at Oxford and public school) is spelled out in as a burdensome and divisive accounting matter, and is graphically represented in the wary, watchful encounters between family members -- while in *The Years* much of this gendered tension is to be read between the lines. In both versions

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<sup>45</sup> Shiach 2004, 82-88.

Woolf uses the narrative stance of chronicler of family life and times to show that much more is exchanged in these encounters than is directly spoken of in dialogue. As he enters his house, the patriarch, military style, employs surprise and assumed moral superiority to wrong-foot subordinates: 'What have you all been up to?' he asked; looking about him with small shrewd authoritative eyes which his children respected and feared (14).<sup>46</sup>

Layers of guilt are palpable in the air and a further layer is projected outward by the father onto his children: 'Captain Pargiter returned. Eleanor paused as if she had been caught in some guilty act. There was a look on their father's face that made them all feel guilty' (16).<sup>47</sup> In the later version of this scene (in *The Years*) the father's entrance is more subtly and ambiguously staged, revealing his belligerence as defensiveness, and his authority -- diminished by his own secret guilt -- as needing compensatory reassertion through the projection of guilt onto his children. Furthermore, Rose, his youngest daughter, (soon to be sexually initiated in a 'street love' encounter) is the one who is singled out.

The Colonel stood at the door and surveyed the group rather fiercely. His small blue eyes looked round them as if to find fault; at the moment there was no particular fault to find; but he was out of temper; they knew at once before he spoke that he was out of temper.

'Grubby little ruffian,' he said, pinching Rose by the ear as he passed her. She put her hand at once over the stain on her pinafore (12).

Masculine authority and its exerted dominance are shown in these exchanges to be based on a systematic procedure of bullying in the manner of a barrack room, a double standard of moral hypocrisy and defensive outward projection of unacknowledged inner guilt, and a regime of fear and suspicion which breeds more guilt and further concealment of feeling. The seamier side of Victorian patriarchal values are exposed -- not through a histrionic drama of masculine outrage (as in Mr Hilbery's jealous tantrum in *Night and Day*, or in Mr Ramsay's self-dramatising posturing), but through an accumulation of small

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<sup>46</sup> Leaska's transcription shows 'admired' as a deleted word in the text in the place of 'respected', indicating Woolf's effort to convey the fine balance of contradictory feeling (admiration, respect, fear) excited in the children by their father's authority and presence (*The Pargiters*, 13).

<sup>47</sup> In *The Pargiters* the father is an army captain.

elements of affective exchange, and a minutely accounted apportioning of responsibility – whereby, for example, the father's casual sexual infidelity is weighed against the momentous but common accident of his youngest daughter's molestation and sexual initiation.

The Colonel's judicious yet traditionally partial apportioning of funds from the family budget for his children's education is strictly in line with gender norms for the period. Differentials in worth attributed to sons and daughters as educational investments or future liabilities are a source of resentment and rivalry. Daughters are valued for their marriageability (a state of potential security made precarious by a 'shortage of the unattached male [...] already felt' in the 1880s<sup>48</sup>, and exacerbated since by the demands of war and Empire for personnel (110)). Subordinated as they are to the pressures of the marriage market and required training in wifely decorum, any educational aspirations which daughters may have, count for little against the expensive necessity of sons being educated in prestigious institutions. Before their father's return, Eleanor admonishes her younger sisters for looking out from an upper window at a young man arriving at a neighbour's house, and for thus exposing their rivalry and desire for a sexual partner – to each other – and worse, to outsiders. Soon after, their father brings news to his daughters of an invitation to dinner: 'I met old Burke at the Club; asked me to bring one of you to dinner; Robin's back, on leave' (4).

The invitation further excites the barely concealed antagonisms among the sisters, though Eleanor already seems to discount herself from the demeaning competition of the marriage market: 'She wished they would say, 'Bring Eleanor,' or 'Bring Milly.' or 'Bring Delia,' instead of lumping them all together. Then there could be no question.' Competition among unmarried daughters and uncertainty about the prospects or desirability of marriage reveal deep rifts between siblings: along gender lines because of

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<sup>48</sup> cf George Gissing's *The Odd Women* (1893), in which the opening scene calculates very precisely how the sisters will struggle to survive on their father's inheritance; and ensuing chapters show those daughters who remain single suffering genteel poverty and real deprivation as declassed women unable to earn a sufficient living.

institutionalised inequality in educational opportunities; and between children and parents (In this case a father soon to be widowed) in terms of how their competing demands are to be managed and reconciled. The subterranean dynamic of household relations -- the concealment and strategic management of tensions around money and love -- is revealed as the stuff of paternal authority, private property being its basis:

But the fact that the money was entirely his, that none of his sons and daughters could take up a profession or marry without asking his consent, had its effect on him -- gave him a position of great power and responsibility. [... It was] inevitable that being accustomed to command as he was, he should not only enjoy the exercise of power, but tend, as time went on, to be a little secretive about the exact amount of his income (31-2).

These extracts from the first drafting of the saga indicate how Woolf uses the essay format to comment on daily minor household events -- exchanges of affect, manoeuvres to gain strategic advantage in household hierarchy -- to take a sociological distance from the fictionalised 'fieldwork site' of her enquiry into the power structure of the middle class household as spawning site of gender inequality. In the Second Essay for example, the nature of different kinds of love between kin is anatomised. Father's love is motivated by pride and protection, i.e. by his ambition that 'his sons would be distinguished men', and his desire that his daughters will marry -- 'all save one perhaps who would live with him'<sup>49</sup> - and bring grandchildren for him to dote on and play games with. Siblings' love gravitates between filial affection based on a deep understanding, and jealousy caused by competitive instincts (e.g. sisters' mutual hostility and manoeuvring over potential male admirers; or a brother's defensive suspicion of a sister's admirer). These relationships have both chronological and spatial dimensions, and are lived out differentially in terms of how unequal genders (male and female kin) are differently mobile -- professionally, socially, geographically, and in terms of class affiliation and status.

The experimental Novel-Essay form of *The Pargiters* (a 'fictional illustration' of a segment of family saga followed by an essay commenting on the social and psychological import of the scene) promised to open a new dimension (alongside but separate from the fiction) of

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<sup>49</sup> *The Pargiters*, 32. Eleanor dutifully fulfils this role of living with her father until his death, as in the Stephen household, Stella Duckworth and then Vanessa did.



social, psychological, historical commentary, designed to give to the author of fiction a certain sociological/anthropological distance for untrammelled commentary and interpretation.<sup>50</sup> As part of an explanation of the difficulties that Woolf faced in carrying her project through, Leaska discusses the creative/antagonistic tension and play between the 'truth of fact' and the 'truth of fiction'. He quotes Woolf's own comment:

For though both truths are genuine, they are antagonistic; let them meet and they destroy each other ... Let it be fact ... or let it be fiction; the imagination will not serve under two masters simultaneously.<sup>51</sup>

By the end of the 1930s Woolf had found different kinds of resolution to this tension in the episodic, hybrid chronicle of continuity and change, *The Years*, and in the epistolary/polemical/fictional hybridity of *Three Guineas*. In *Three Guineas* (as discussed in Chapter 2) the defamiliarised, sociological/anthropological perspective is realised as a vehicle for autoethnography, while the extensive end-notes retain something of the novel-essay's detached, flexible space for commentary (and for forceful juxtaposition of material from disparate sources). In *The Years* authorial perspectives and detached lines of commentary are (nearly seamlessly) integrated into a historical *diminuendo* tracing the fragmentation and demise of the Pargiter clan. Within the narrative itself a multi-layered representation of historical change produces a fictional form of the autoethnographic mode. In the reading put forward in this thesis, the Pargiter demise reflects the decline of a hegemonic, patriarchal gender order whose seemingly established certainties at the beginning of the saga (1880) coincide with the late nineteenth century highpoint of British imperial power -- to be followed by decline from the early twentieth century. Definitive disillusionment culminates in the final episode, 'The Present Day' in the 1930s, tempered by a muted note of uncertain yet optimistic belief in renewal through change. The passing of decades in *The Years* is reflected in changing seasons and shifting patterns of weather recorded in the opening paragraphs of each episode (akin to the technique employed in *The Waves* where the detailed natural events of the interludes mirrors the detail of human

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<sup>50</sup> Leaska (Introduction 1978, xx) comments: 'instances are indeed rare when we find a novelist of Virginia Woolf's stature presenting a fictional specimen and then immediately analyzing, explaining, and interpreting the scene for us'.

<sup>51</sup> Virginia Woolf 'The New Biography', *New York Herald Tribune*, October 30, 1927.

events in the episodes spanning the lifetime of the characters). 'It was an uncertain spring' (TY 5) -- the lines which open the novel and the '1880' episode suggest change, risk and promise under a lunar regime shining 'with serenity, with severity, or perhaps with complete indifference' (6) as days, weeks, years wheel and pass across the sky. An unrecorded decade passes; then '1891' opens with autumn wind blowing over England. The breezy, bracing atmosphere in London is tinged with smoke as 'keen fanged flames' consume heaped up leaves -- '[f]or it was October, the birth of the year' (74). Capital is accumulated and surplus value extracted. 'Money was in brisk circulation. The streets were crowded. Upon the sloping desks of the offices near St Paul's, clerks paused with their pens on the ruled page. It was difficult to work after the holidays' (73). '1917' opens in freezing cold winter darkness -- a searchlight rays the sky, 'stopped here and there, as if to ponder some fleecy patch' (225). War years intensify the acuity (and objectivity?) of the chronicler's scrutiny: the searchlight a figure for the dispassionate, enquiring gaze of the chronicler of changing times. Night journeys by bus through darkened London and a new sense of collectivity (even solidarity) between people create new terms of relationship across gender and class. Thoughts of Napoleon (engendered by Nicholas's biographical/historical ruminations about the lives and achievements of great men: grand but ephemeral) feed a wary new consciousness of historical change and changed conditions of life. 'The years changed things; destroyed things; heaped things up' (219).

### **7) 'Street love', separate spheres, sexual and social mobility**

In *The Pargiters*, as Julia Briggs points out, Woolf is searching for, and to some extent begins to invent a terminology for discussion of, a discourse to describe historical change in relations of gender and power. In figuring the household walls as a thin partition between 'respectable' (and repressed) love and the dangerous, illicit and unregulated forms of sexual encounter beyond the confines of the bourgeois/patriarchal domestic domain, she invents the term 'street love' for a further and 'a different kind of love', which

also has agency both within and outside the household.<sup>52</sup> Operating in the external world but also strongly felt 'pressing on the walls of Abercorn Terrace', 'street love' sets particular boundaries around the female domestic sphere and marks gender roles fundamentally:

Street love, common love, of the kind [...] which made it impossible for the Pargiter girls to walk in the West End alone. [...] Bond Street was as impassable, save with their mother, as any swamp alive with crocodiles' [...] the Burlington Arcade [...] a fever-stricken den (TP 37).

The proximity, in the streets outside the household walls, of illicit, unregulated love, requires that females under thirty be confined within the controlled domesticity of the house, their behaviour within and their access to the world outside carefully regulated. This aspect of female confinement and regulation creates the deepest divisions between brothers and sisters. While her older sisters have learned to test the limits of their confinement more judiciously (Delia, for example, asserts her independence by wearing a veil to brave the dangers of the Burlington Arcade!), it is the youngest daughter whose accidental exposure to the corrupting dangers of the street reveals the stark nature of the threats to which girls or women may be exposed. Rose, the youngest of the four sisters, still a child, twice called by her father 'a grubby little ruffian', as her guilty hand seeks to conceal from his sharp eyes a stain on her pinafore,<sup>53</sup> makes an illicit expedition alone to the local shop, since no one is willing to accompany her. To give herself courage she fantasizes herself on a heroic military mission – 'Pargiter of Pargiter's Horse [...] riding to the rescue!' (24). On the way there and back she is accosted by a man who exposes himself indecently: an incident which visits her in her dreams and stays with her for life.

While girls cannot go out after dark unless chaperoned by a maid or a brother, boys have much more freedom of movement, and they acquire sexual knowledge at a relatively much younger age – at the age of twelve the sexual knowledge of the Pargiters' youngest

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<sup>52</sup> Briggs (2006, 280) comments that Woolf's term: 'street or common love', to describe the threat faced by young women, seems oddly inappropriate until it is remembered 'that she was obliged to invent for herself a discourse of social and cultural analysis that had not yet come into being'.

<sup>53</sup> Leaska (1978, xxi) sees in Rose's instinctive gesture and in her conflicted relationship with her elderly father 'all the complex circuits of guilt, sexual confusion, the desire for approval, and the need to lie built into that simple gesture of the ten-year-old girl who -- to use some shorthand -- was "growing up Victorian."

son surpasses that of his sisters in their young adulthood. This difference is illustrated by another street encounter -- differently memorable, but an instructive parallel to Rose's damaging experience. For Bobby,<sup>54</sup> Rose's brother, an encounter with a prostitute on the street is not a mark of victimhood but is an exhilarating initiation into the (relatively unrestrained) sexual mobility of manhood; and it enhances rather than undermines his self-confidence. His older school friend (seventeen and big for his age) coolly brushes off the laughter, jeers and 'filth' provocatively directed at them by a woman of the street, while young Pargiter walks on calmly, proud of this 'grown-up adventure', and prouder still that his friend should by using the word "prostitute" initiate him into what he

dimly felt was a great fellowship -- the fellowship of men together -- a fellowship which he began to feel, yielded a great many rights and privileges, and required even of himself at the age of twelve, certain loyalties and assertions (TP 54).

The contrast implicitly drawn between the highly gendered nature of these two 'street love' encounters, both figured as 'adventures' of independent mobility and exploration, emphasises the bifurcating distance which the realities of gender formation in the Victorian middle-class home create between young people of different sex. Accidents of birth and experience mark differently mobile sons and daughters profoundly, inscribe themselves as part of gendered identity, shaping career trajectory and social future, and the realisation or not of private dreams and aspirations. Rose carries a psychological scar for the rest of her life, though she (perhaps) sloughs off (or learns from) the damage and reverses expectations by becoming a suffragette (she is later imprisoned for throwing a brick). While it is not evident that Martin (in *The Years*) later gains much from his membership of the 'great fellowship' (he becomes an army captain then a business man; and Eleanor surmises that 'he had a great many love affairs' (TY 126)).

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<sup>54</sup> Martin in *The Years*.

## 8) Homosociality and the 'Procession'

'The procession' is a term frequently used by Woolf to refer to the rituals and social ceremonies associated with elite men's progress through defining stages of life. As Noel Annan suggests, it refers to the networks of all-male association which regulate and facilitate men's careers – 'the influential network derived from public school and university education'.<sup>55</sup> The obverse of men's participation in homosocial rituals of belonging and inclusion is of course women's exclusion from them, and instances of this real and symbolic division recur throughout Woolf's writing. They mark the psychic boundaries ('chalk marks') separating the social spheres. However, in so far as women are also shown as colluding in different ways in their own confinement and oppression (e.g. through their control of social rituals and aspects of the marriage market as well as in managing the household itself and bringing up children), there is also an identifiably female, domestic version of the 'procession' which mirrors the male procession. An example of this occurs in *The Voyage Out* when Rachel (a bride who is not to be) in a dreamlike and alienated state, observes as if from afar, people performing the social rituals of courtship, marriage and family life – a procession in which she has no wish to participate. The question of female participation in the 'procession' (after some limited gains in political emancipation) is also raised in *Three Guineas*, where the young woman (on the 'bridge' of potential opportunity) debates the likely losses and gains of joining the tail-end of the male procession. While a distinctively anthropological, sharply satirical, and politically alienated, female view of the male 'procession' is explicitly constructed only in *Three Guineas* (and further satirical/anthropological distance added by the use of photographs of extravagant, exclusively male display in public ceremonials of political, ecclesiastical and academic life), a distanced perspective on the male procession is also broadly refracted in most of the novels. For example, the historical sweep of *The Years* allows a longer perspective to be taken on these processes: key stages of young men's progress towards maturity and achievement in the public world are marked by symbolic moments of initiation, recognition and promise in early episodes – while in later episodes,

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<sup>55</sup> Annan, 1984, 52.

significant dissonance occurs when promising career trajectories fail to materialise, or no longer figure as a strand of narrative worthy of attention.<sup>56</sup> In *To The Lighthouse* Mr Ramsay suffers frustration and disillusion at having reached the furthest point of his mature academic attainment, from where the rewards of participation in the procession fail to appease his need for current and meaningful recognition and his desire for lasting renown looks utterly ill-founded; while *A Room of One's Own* and *Jacob's Room* (the scenes of Jacob at Cambridge) focus precisely on the world of male academic achievement from which women are specifically excluded.

### **9) Homosociality: military, academic, literary**

As we have seen from his encounter with a prostitute on the street, the youngest Pargiter son becomes aware at an early age of his sexual identity and power: in the moment of recognition he suddenly feels included in 'a great fellowship of men' – a male homosocial identity defined by a sense of personal superiority undergirded by his sexual/intellectual/spiritual/social/'class' difference from women. His older brother, Edward, undergoes a parallel *rite de passage* (of entry into a differently configured elite masculine group) when he feels himself selected for induction into the mystique of masculine social and academic fellowship reaching back into an imagined, unbroken history of English greatness, its values inculcated through his apt and obedient training in sports and scholarship at school and college. At a moment of great promise as a Classics scholar in his final year at Oxford, he allows 'wild thoughts' of achievement and fame to surface in his mind -- 'that his name too would be revered, as he now revered the names of those great men who had been here before him' (TP 62). Another such moment occurs as (in the later draft of the text) he completes his preparations for his final exams.

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<sup>56</sup> Lipking 1977, 141: men's careers 'sink like stones'; 'people who think' are foregrounded -- those with 'careers and marriages' disappear from view.

Assiduously prepared, he follows his tutor's advice to relax his pace in the last lap, and he reads *Antigone* both for pleasure and as intellectual exercise: 'His own dexterity in catching the phrase plumb in the middle gave him a thrill of excitement' (TY 42).

He rewards himself afterwards with wine given to him by the Colonel, his father:

'You can't drive a bayonet through a chap's body in cold blood,' he remembered him saying.

'And you can't go in for an exam without drinking,' said Edward (43).

His reading of *Antigone* links him in a triangular relationship of desire and contentious affiliation to the girl of his dreams, Kitty, the college Master's daughter ('a girl whom he scarcely knew'), and to two fellow students who compete over his attentions.<sup>57</sup> Sipping wine while reading, he summons up the alluring image of Kitty as a Greek girl, as *Antigone*, but his fantasy is interrupted by awkwardly overlapping visits from two quite disparate male peers: Gibbs whose only conversation is 'girls and horses'; and the homosexual Tony Ashley 'who could only talk about books'. 'They both looked at him, as he sat between them, admiringly. The vanity, which Eleanor always laughed at in her brother, was flattered. He liked to feel their eyes on him' (TY 45).

Edward's narcissism and his ignorance of women in general and of Kitty in particular, scupper his attempt, before the arrival of his friends, to write her a love poem. His effort is imitative, sentimental and, in his own estimation, worthless -- ('when the writer idealises his subject he almost always sentimentalises himself')<sup>58</sup>. His narcissism and his ignorance of women are central to the homosocial bonds which tie him to his male peers and distance him from Kitty's real female person (Kitty soon enough marries someone else).

Edward's rarified existence in the elite, enclosed environment of an exclusively male 'Oxbridge' college not only cuts him off from the real everyday world (the struggle for

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<sup>57</sup> Edward's erotic fantasy about *Antigone* later mysteriously finds its way into his subsequently published English translation of the text. In the '1907' Episode of *The Years*, Sara reads a copy given to her by Edward, as she lies sleepless on a hot summer night listening to dance music and popular songs from a neighbour's party. In the final 'Present Day' Episode, Edward claims he cannot translate a line he himself quotes (translated in Hussey 1995, 7: 'I cannot share in hatred, but in loving'). Woolf's allusions to the 'buried alive' theme of the play (Marcus 1987, 102) are cumulative and suggestive.

<sup>58</sup> Woolf 1978, Fourth Essay, *The Pargiters*, Leaska, ed, 83.

survival on the Strand, for example), but also from the actual world inhabited by women.<sup>59</sup> His earlier schooling (in manliness and the Classics), its gains summed up in the vow he makes in the 'lonely chapel' as a graduating public schoolboy, includes him in a mystic homosocial fellowship but also makes him a complete stranger to Kitty's experience, understandings, hopes and aspirations. Woolf dramatises the gulf of mutual ignorance between the two novice, would-be lovers by juxtaposing scenes in *The Pargiters* of each alone, trapped in gendered insulation (in a homosocial ivory tower; in the academic/social rituals of dutiful daughterhood in the Master's Lodge), each yearning for the other as a form of release (for him, sexual; for her, marital).

The representation of gender relations in the domestic households depicted in these three novels demonstrates radical development in Woolf's autoethnographic technique and equally radical departures in terms of formal innovation. Examination of the complicity of household members in performing gendered roles which uphold patriarchy in the domestic sphere (the household as 'empire of the father') is largely implicit in the early *Night and Day*. The novel's play with 'ancestor worship', with the ruses and illusions of biographical aggrandisement of 'great men' (in this case an unmatched literary forebear whose greatness proves to be unrecordable by female biographers), and with the trope of dance as analogue for the performance of social roles, shows Woolf evading the 'anxiety of influence' of her own literary forebears while at the same time indirectly indicating the economic and affective basis of the father's empire. The psychoanalytical method adopted in *To The Lighthouse* to expose unconscious conflict in the Ramsay household, as time and war take their toll on family life, is a significant innovation which makes for a much more explicit account of gender relations under pressure of change. Its remarkable effect upon her subsequent work can be illustrated by the exchange across the dinner table in the third chapter of *Three Guineas* between correspondent and interlocutor

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<sup>59</sup> Exclusively male 'public' schools provided an environment effectively inured from the 'maternal influence' which was so highly valued in the domestic space, but which undermined 'an effective manly training at home' (Tosh 1999, 119).



(female and male; daughter and father; sister and brother; writer and psychoanalyst). The exchange is unmediated by the 'veil' of polite conversation; on the contrary, psychoanalysis permits unmasked feelings (e.g. aggression, jealousy) to be expressed (apparently). A similar unveiling takes place in *The Pargiters* to reveal the hidden, subterranean agencies at work in the household: 'the economy of love and money'. The sociological/historical Essays in the draft text provide a dimension wherein individual experience (oppression within a hierarchical household) can be contextualized. As Snaith argues, the re-writing of the draft family chronicle as the integrated novel *The Years* produces an experimental form for 'the conjunction of feminist politics and fiction in the 1930s' (2000, 112). It is also a form in which the demise of the 'empire of the father' can be anatomised autoethnographically using both the flexibility of fiction and the objectivity of historical research.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Education: masculine formation and male scholarship

#### 1) Introduction

Woolf's analysis of how male social privilege and exclusive homosocial academic culture produce and sustain assumptions about masculine intellectual superiority, and provide ideological justification for women's educational and social exclusion, is elaborated most explicitly in *A Room Of One's Own* (1929) and *Three Guineas* (1938). However, it is in her fictional accounts in the two novels examined in this chapter, *Jacob's Room* (1922) and *The Waves* (1931), that her understanding of the particular role of institutionalised education (overseen by Anglican schoolmasters in public schools and by a similar priestly caste at Oxbridge) in reproducing masculine dominance (with its dividend of privilege and its unacknowledged fragility) is demonstrated in most detail. Both novels feature men as protagonists, and both in different ways, while tracing processes of the construction of gendered identity, represent masculine character as being formed in or against an anachronistic -- and crumbling -- image of monumental and hegemonic English 'gentlemanly' masculinity. Both novels also represent masculine performance as being radically destabilised by twentieth century war and the decline of British imperial power. The absentee war hero/victim, Jacob Flanders, stands for a whole young male generation whose failure to return from France to fulfil their promise puts traditional masculine formation and patriarchal inheritance in question. In the inter-war period, the men in *The Waves*, educated in the shadow of the old order and pursuing professional careers in the modern manner, compete as literary inheritors partly out of need to compensate for loss, while the fall from his hegemonic pedestal of Percival, the model of and for colonial/imperial masculinity, announces uncertain new conditions of modern *anomie*. These four texts, two polemical essays and two highly experimental novels, are the vehicles through which Woolf most thoroughly explores the processes of elite male education and its consequences. Schools, universities and libraries feature as sites where specifically masculine forms of knowledge and learning are promoted and

preserved; yet despite their role in producing patriotic masculine subjects, these sequestered institutions of learning are insulated from the brutal realities of war and impervious to political indicators of imperial decline. In their suggestive depiction of a shifting landscape of historical change, the two novels foreshadow post-Imperial social and cultural change by focusing on individual characters' momentary apprehension of turbulent times: their acceptance or resistance to change, and their relative capacity for survival. Thus the symbolic absence and fall of the novels' two representative male protagonists (Jacob and Percival) call into question the historical value and hegemony of traditional learning emanating from male-dominated institutions, and the political, imperial purposes to which it has been and is put. An implicit connection is established between the ends of Empire (its purposes) and the protracted processes of its decline (its ending).

In all four of these texts an observing woman establishes an outside perspective upon a male dominated world: whether as narrator (*Jacob's Room*), trespassing outsider (*A Room of One's Own*), a primal female casting a lamp (the sun) upon the world and/or 'a woman writing' glimpsed in a garden (*The Waves*), or a political outsider and epistolary autoethnographer (*Three Guineas*). This chapter focuses upon ways in which processes of exclusive male education and learning are brought into view by means of this critical, outside perspective. The ghostly female narrator haunting the quads of Jacob's Cambridge and failing to delineate in firm outline his progress or achievement as an undergraduate, reappears more substantially in the Oxbridge and British Library of *A Room of One's Own* as a trespasser on college lawns and a frustrated feminist researcher. However strongly contrasted, the very different outside perspectives of *The Waves* and *Three Guineas* have in view the same object of study, the male of the species and the origins and consequences of his occupation of elite sites of learning. The critical character of the outsider perspective on education and masculine formation in these texts perhaps implies a pre-existent view on Woolf's part of what a non-exclusive, female-oriented education might look like. However, while Woolf clearly was interested in the forms that institutional education for women could take, its shape is to be inferred from the

style and content of her lectures (e.g. those later published as *A Room of One's Own* and *Professions for Women*) rather than from any blueprint. Cuddy-Keane suggests that in *A Room of One's Own* Woolf's aim in relation to the principle of educational inclusion is to 'clear a space for the future rather than to fix the past' (2003, 97), while *Three Guineas* specifies that a rebuilt, 'experimental ... and adventurous' women's college would be non-hierarchical, with a pacifist, collaborative curriculum combining creative and intellectual work, 'in which learning is sought for itself; where advertisement is abolished; and there are no degrees, and lectures are not given, and sermons are not preached ...' (156). There is a fantasised feminist academic moment of spring awakening at Fernham women's college (with Jane Harrison to the fore) in *A Room of One's Own*,<sup>1</sup> but a dour and plain reality soon reasserts itself. New and insecurely established women's colleges compete in the present on highly unequal terms with historically prestigious and richly endowed male colleges; meanwhile Woolf dramatises her acts of trespass and the difficulty of her own feminist research in the alienated preserves of male learning at Oxbridge and in the British Library. In *The Waves* an elite girls' school provides a complement (but not an oppositional alternative) to boys' public school education.

Despite Woolf's characteristic unwillingness to make precise predictions about a future form for women's education, there is an interesting parallel in the shared disdain of both Woolf and Bourdieu for the traditional format of the academic lecture. Bourdieu emphasises the effect of the symbolic spatial distance between the lecturer's podium and audience in consecrating *his* authority, preventing dialogue, producing incomprehension through mystifying the discourse of knowledge and learning.<sup>2</sup> Woolf, for her part, would ban the 'vain and vicious system of lecturing' on the grounds that 'psychologically eminence upon a platform encourages vanity and the desire to impose authority'.<sup>3</sup> Woolf's reader- and listener-oriented perspective, as developed in her essays and reviews, affirms a plurality of views and opposes the (masculinised) hostilities of spoken

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<sup>1</sup> '[I]loosely based on Newnham College, Cambridge', Hussey, 1995, 233.

<sup>2</sup> Bourdieu et al. 1994, 5, 11.

<sup>3</sup> *Three Guineas*, 158; Note 30, 285.

and written academic discourse, through which it is the norm that the view of the speaker should prevail. As the new academic subject of English draws its boundaries Woolf's informal essay is located on the *outside* of such institutionalised discourses.<sup>4</sup>

*Three Guineas* (see Chapter 2) has been interpreted as a feminist subversion and parody of male academic research and scholarship (Black 2001, Marcus 2006) which ridicules the boundaries established in a patriarchal social order to mark off legitimate territory in a sexual division of intellectual labour. Bourdieu's explorations in the field of education – the intellectual stand-off in French academic institutions in 1968 in *Homo Academicus* (1984) – provides another point of reference against which to view Woolf's fictional and polemical accounts of male scholarship. Reed-Donahay suggests that Bourdieu 'drew on Virginia Woolf as a collaborator in his theory, ... her fiction demonstrating the same gender classifications and misrecognition among upper-class English people as he found among the Kabyles'.<sup>5</sup> Evident 'affinity' in terms of method and perspective between the mid-to-late twentieth century French sociologist and anthropologist who makes innovative use of modernist literature and photo-journalistic techniques to add qualitative depth to the 'scientificity' of his studies of tradition and modernity in Algeria and France,<sup>6</sup> and the early-to-mid twentieth century English writer of experimental modernist fiction who uses distancing autoethnographic perspectives to observe the modern public masculine world, is as remarkable as it is various. It consists both in a perceived need to break generic boundaries (of academic disciplines and of literary form) in order to penetrate analytically beneath the surface of social life as it is commonly perceived and represented, and in a capacity and commitment to do so consistently over the course of a professional career. Such parallels and affinities make it opportune to use Bourdieu's theory of practice for analysis of Woolf's fictional representations of men. Thus, following Bourdieu's account of *habitus*, *The Waves*, for example, can be read as a detailed account of the acquisition of male and female gendered dispositions through processes of education, maturation and

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<sup>4</sup> Cuddy-Keane 2003, p. 79.

<sup>5</sup> Reed-Donahay, D. 2005 *Locating Bourdieu*, 90.

<sup>6</sup> Reed-Danahay describes Bourdieu's innovative ethnographic use of juxtaposed interviews and photographs as being akin to Joyce's and Woolf's literary impressionism.

social conditioning, which align behaviour, perceptions and performance according to the norms of an 'androcentric' social order.

This chapter also makes use of contrasting accounts of *Bildung* (Gadamer, Bourdieu) to discuss Woolf's subversion of the *Bildungsroman* genre in her account of the demise of a Victorian/Edwardian masculine hegemony – as the sun sets on the British Empire. The two novels (the early *Jacob's Room* and the late *The Waves*) exhibit certain features of the *Bildungsroman*, but do so in ways which undermine fundamental tenets of the genre: symbolically through the deaths of both hero/protagonists (Jacob and Percival) before their promise is realised; and through the detailed focus, not on hard-won achievement of traditional cultivation, but on anomic states of mind and feeling, and uncertainty about the very possibility of such achievement. An elegiac mood softens the sharp edge of satire in these novels, which, both in their form and content, fundamentally question the hitherto asserted certainties of a dying old order.

## **2) Bildung and masculine formation**

The discussion draws on contrasting accounts of formation and cultivation (*Bildung*): the acquisition of culture and knowledge. Gadamer's discussion of *Bildung* places it in the idealist tradition of Kant, wherein an (unquestionably male) subject fulfils a perceived duty to 'rise up to humanity through culture' – evoking an ancient mystical tradition whereby man carries in his soul an image of God, after whom he is fashioned and which he must cultivate in himself. Kant's originary notion was the human subject's duty to oneself to cultivate a natural talent: 'an act of freedom by the acting subject'. A definition of Gadamer's hermeneutic project is that of producing an 'ontology of the universal experience of understanding'.<sup>7</sup> Gadamer draws for his own definition of *Bildung* on Herder's '*Bildung zum Menschen*', a new ideal of 'cultivating the human', which prepared the ground for the historical sciences in the nineteenth century. Gadamer draws also on

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<sup>7</sup> Distal, R. J., ed, 2002. *Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, 5.

Hegel -- for whom 'man is characterised by the break with the immediate and the natural that the intellectual, rational side of his nature demands of him'.<sup>8</sup>

Since man is not by nature what he should be -- he needs *Bildung*. By rising to a state of universality, sacrificing particularity for the sake of the universal, man cultivates in himself positive qualities: moderation, health, circumspection (he is open to observing what else might be necessary for his formation), and tact. Thus, according to Gadamer, theoretically *Bildung* leads the acting subject beyond what he knows and experiences immediately, e.g. by learning about the world and studying the languages of antiquity. *Bildung* therefore is the process 'of historically raising the mind to the universal and at the same time is the element in which the educated man (*Gebildete*) moves' (14). A central goal of this formative cultivation is the development of the essential quality of 'tact', which is both a 'form of judgement' and a 'mode of knowledge of the human sciences'.<sup>9</sup> 'The human sciences presuppose that the scholarly consciousness is already formed and thus possesses the right, un-learnable and inimitable tact [...] as if the element in which they move' (15).

Gadamer's notion of *Bildung* adheres closely to the philosophical traditions of a European culture which spawned the Grand Tour as a culminating educative journey of achieved cultivation: the 'finishing' of the polished, tactful and necessarily wealthy noble or gentleman.<sup>10</sup> Bourdieu, by contrast, uses the concept as a tool of analysis in a very different scholarly tradition: to enlarge upon the relevance of his own theory of practice to studies of late twentieth century gendered performance; and to form a theoretical bridge of continuity between ancient Mediterranean societies and their modern European

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<sup>8</sup> Gadamer, H-G. 1989. *Truth and Method*, 12.

<sup>9</sup> 'In acquiring *Bildung* nothing disappears, but everything is preserved. *Bildung* is a general historical idea, and because of this historical character of 'preservation' it is important for understanding in the human sciences' *Truth and Method*, 12.

<sup>10</sup> Jacob completes such *Bildung* as he undergoes by going on a tour (paid for by a legacy) to Italy and Greece to visit the ancient sites. Far from being 'Grand', his tour is mostly by train, supplemented by lifts in the carriage of the upper-class Wentworth-Williams who adopt him briefly -- or rather, Sandra Wentworth-Williams takes him under her wing.

successors.<sup>11</sup> Bourdieu's late twentieth century notion of *Bildung* is applied to his analysis of androcentric/patriarchal Mediterranean societies as a critical tool to explain the social and psychological mechanisms whereby men and women acquire and embody within themselves the dispositions, habits of mind and behaviour of the dominant and the dominated within a specific social order. The foundations of masculine domination in such societies depend on cultural formation and 'bodily *hexis*' (posture, bearing, physical performance) in conformity to norms established and inscribed in a strict division of labour according to ancient traditions of men's and women's work in the agricultural cycle. Thus, even and also in so-called 'modern' societies, the social order, based as it is on ancient traditions, is progressively inscribed in people's minds; and social structures based on gendered inequality are progressively and insidiously embodied in their daily performance, such inculcation and identification being facilitated especially through the ideological and formative work of central institutions such as the family, systems of education and religious institutions. In the concluding section of *The Logic of Practice* (1990) Bourdieu refers back to Karl Marx's fundamental tenet that human consciousness is conditioned by its environment and not *vice versa*, with a reminder that all knowledge, especially of the social world, is an act of construction which implements certain 'schemes of thought and expression'. Between the given conditions of existence and the resulting practices or representations 'intervenes the structuring activity of the agents who, far from reacting mechanically to mechanical stimulations, respond to the invitations or threats of a world whose meaning they have helped to produce' (467).

Bourdieu's account of the meaning of practice in everyday life seeks (as Woolf also seeks in her dramatisations of her characters' lived responses to such 'invitations or threats') to dismantle a sense that the world is ordered according to a 'system of universal forms and categories' (the kinds of categories that Woolf's male kin and associates, and her fictionalised representations of learned men, debated at Oxbridge and in Bloomsbury).

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<sup>11</sup> Reed-Danahay notes Bourdieu's linking (which some commentators find questionable) of Kabyle culture to a notionally enduring and extensive 'Mediterranean culture' which claimed affinity between Kabyle and French customs to the exclusion of Arab culture, thus indirectly endorsing French colonial claims in Algeria. Reed-Danahay suggests that this notion is implicit in some of his early work, but becomes more explicit in *Masculine Domination* (1998).



Rather, Bourdieu argues, knowledge of the social world is constituted 'in the course of collective history' as a 'system of internalised, embodied schemes' which are acquired by individuals in the course of their individual history. Such schemes 'function in their practical state, for *practice* (and not for the sake of pure knowledge).'

### **3) Elite education in public schools and Oxbridge**

As ever in any moment in the last two centuries of British history, discussions of education are closely linked to complex and characteristically opaque issues of social class.

Accounts of the history of English education in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are intertwined with continuing debates about the nature and extent of *embourgeoisement* in Britain in this period, the rise of the entrepreneurial middle classes and the extent of their assimilation with, or co-optation into the older traditional elites, the landed classes and the aristocracy. The public schools, the reformed university system and a developing system of professional and vocational training are all sites of contention between competing interests in this period, and historical accounts of these struggles are valuable for the light they throw on Woolf's critical accounts of upper middle class education and privileged male scholarship in her novels and essays.

Reform of secondary and higher education and of professional training in the second half of the nineteenth and in the early twentieth century was undertaken under pressure of Britain's changing economic needs as an imperial and colonial power, and as part of a long drawn-out political accommodation between different factions of the ruling elite.<sup>12</sup> A key aspect of continuing debate about these issues is the evolving role of the 'new' public schools in providing a common type of secondary education for the sons of the landed classes and of the wealthiest echelons of the middle classes; while elite university

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<sup>12</sup> Stephens, W. B. 1998. *Education in Britain 1750-1914*; Anderson, R. D. 1992. *Universities and Elites in Britain since 1800*; Anderson P. 1964. 'Origins of the present crisis', *New Left Review* No. 23; Moretti, 2013. *The Bourgeois*.

education at Oxbridge<sup>13</sup> remained relatively unchanged in terms of access during a period which saw the emergence and growth of a more meritocratic university system elsewhere in Britain.<sup>14</sup> In discussing these issues it is also relevant to touch on one particular aspect of professional training: the debate occasioned by proposed reform of the training of top administrators for the Indian Civil Service, as this also illustrates the nature of the reforms and accommodations reached in other parts of the education system.

The reasons for focusing on these particular aspects of education in the period are several: firstly, Woolf, in treating male education in her fiction and discursive writing, focuses almost exclusively on elite male education in public schools and Oxbridge (apart from where she discusses women's education – though here too, her discussions are mostly premised on female exclusion from these forms of elite education);<sup>15</sup> secondly, these are the forms of education with which she was familiar, though only at second-hand, through her knowledge of the privileged opportunities provided for her male kin and associates, but not for her. In addition, the public schools have been widely recognised, in histories of British education, in nineteenth and early twentieth century English fiction (in mainstream novels as well as in boys' adventure fiction),<sup>16</sup> and by historians of British culture, for their key role in training future leaders for patriotic and imperial service at home and abroad, and Woolf takes up this theme in her novels – especially *Jacob's Room* and *The Waves*, in her representation of Jacob and Percival as exemplars of a classic imperial/colonial form of hegemonic masculinity.

Historians of this period of British education concur in identifying the key political and cultural role of the public schools as providing a mechanism of assimilation for the

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<sup>13</sup> 'Oxbridge', the 'common English shorthand for the two elite universities and their products' (Hussey 1995, 207), is used here for convenience except where it is relevant to distinguish between the two universities; however, it is acknowledged that this does have the effect of eliding differences between them: e.g. Oxford's emphasis on the classics and Cambridge's emphasis on mathematics.

<sup>14</sup> The Oxbridge Classics-based curriculum began to change during this period; and women gained limited access to elite universities from the 1870s, as Woolf discusses in *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*.

<sup>15</sup> Q. D. Leavis's hostile review of *Three Guineas* takes Woolf to task for omitting discussion of the newer universities.

<sup>16</sup> As discussed in, e.g., Mackenzie, 1984 *Propaganda and Empire*, Dawson 1994 *Soldier Heroes*.

absorption of the most opulent sections of the new entrepreneurial middle class into the system of values and privilege traditionally enjoyed exclusively by the older elite. The assimilation can be seen as a two-way process, whereby the landed classes assimilated to 'the competitive values and religious propensities of the middle class',<sup>17</sup> while the middle classes bought into the character training, classical education and cultural formation which gave access to power and influence and a means of consolidating, within a generation or two, a newfound class status as members of a broader ruling elite. This analysis is in line with the 'Wiener thesis' whereby 'liberal education created a homogenous and cohesive elite' which formed a 'crucial rebuff for the social revolution begun by industrialisation'.<sup>18</sup> There appears, however, to be less consensus among historians of the period as to the extent to which either class succeeded in establishing cultural and political dominance in terms of actual control over the elite sector of education and its role in economic and political affairs. Anderson, for example, argues for the significance of factors such as the meritocratic public examination system introduced in the late-1880s in curtailing the influence of the old elite. He also identifies three linked but distinct propositions which form part of a continuing debate on this issue: that the middle class failed to establish cultural dominance and surrendered to the pre-industrial landed class; that the middle class split between a gentrified professional sector and a non-elite industrial and commercial sector; that 'elite values transmitted through education embodied an "anti-entrepreneurial" culture which had debilitating effects on economic performance' (32). The first of these propositions describes the position of left-leaning historians who argue that far from being an accommodation which established a new consensus and relative parity of influence among a broadened and somewhat more representative ruling elite, the new *status quo* actually represented a triumph for the aristocracy, who were able to retain their hegemonic position in a modernised ruling class. Arno Mayer describes the class adaptation – across Europe – as follows:

The old elites excelled at selectively ingesting, adapting, and assimilating new ideas and practices without seriously endangering their traditional status,

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<sup>17</sup> Stephens, 1998, 48.

<sup>18</sup> Anderson here refers to the influential argument put forward in Wiener's *English Culture and the Industrial Spirit 1850-1980* (1981).

temperament, and outlook. [...] Whereas the nobility was skilled at adaptation, the bourgeoisie excelled at emulation. [...] The grandees of business and finance bought landed estates, built country houses, sent their sons to elite higher schools, and assumed aristocratic poses and life styles. [...] Last but not least, they solicited decorations and, above all, patents of nobility.<sup>19</sup>

Mayer's wider thesis is that, through adaptation and assimilation, the landed elites across Europe survived as a 'rampart of the old regime', with 'feudal', pre-industrial and pre-bourgeois values and practices largely intact, into the twentieth century up until the First World War; and furthermore, that in England these feudal elements 'forced industry to fit itself into pre-existing social, class, and ideological structures' (12). Mayer's thesis provides valuable contextual background for understanding Woolf's treatment in her novels of the rituals and consecrating ceremonies of public school and Oxbridge life. Traditional elite education was based on the classics and 'liberal education' continued this tradition in some sectors well into the second half of the twentieth century. Mayer suggests that the classical revival may have 'peaked' by the turn of the century:

Even so, the classics remained the central control valve of a finely tuned screening mechanism down to 1914 and beyond. The purpose of this screening was not to block upward mobility of the sons of peasants, workers and *petit bourgeois*. Since higher education remained an affair of the elite rather than the masses, it fixed the conditions and allurements for the co-optative integration of the sons of magnates of business and the professions into the ruling class. It impeded the formation of a counter elite and counter hegemony (256).

As Woolf does in her representation of masculine *Bildung*, Mayer's account captures the backward-looking and memorialising ethos and the distinguishing cultural features of the English public schools -- in their rural isolation and with special emphasis on the classics and sports, they boarded boys in 'simulated country houses' and shaped them according to the normatively traditional model of the 'gentleman' -- with a rural/landed inflection. Despite some initial resistance (an understandable fear of 'being snubbed') on the part of the English *bourgeoisie* of manufacturing and trade which emerged with the industrialisation and urbanisation of the nineteenth century -- because it never developed, as a class, 'an educational project of its own', and had no alternative channel of social

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<sup>19</sup> Mayer, A. 2010. *The Persistence of the Old Regime: Europe to the Great War*, 13. The last point in the quotation is significant in understanding Woolf's scathing ridicule of men's self-glorification in the text and photographs of *Three Guineas*. It also possibly points to a certain class animus in the contempt she expresses for this form of masculine posing.

advancement -- their sons were forced to submit to an educational regime overseen by schoolmasters, most of them Anglican clergymen, who 'used their educational monopoly for co-optative purposes.'

England's public schools were perfectly geared to foster the continuing primacy of the aristocratic element in civil and political society. [...] Geographically isolated, these educational estates were designed to affirm the supremacy of the aristocracy's memorial life-style. Touched by pastoral nostalgia, prosperous city-dwellers in particular gave up their sons to be initiated and entrapped in England's land-bound tradition (257).

Perry Anderson also points to the crucial role of educational institutions in upholding what he terms a 'unique paradox in the supremely capitalist society of Victorian England': the aristocracy became -- and remained -- 'the vanguard of the bourgeoisie'. A common education system, with the new public schools, reformed universities and a reformed training system for the civil service as the 'central mechanism of assimilation', produced a 'deliberate, systemised symbiosis' of the classes by socialising both the old and new rich within a distinctive, uniform pattern based on the 'fetishized criterion of the "gentleman"'.<sup>20</sup> 'The bourgeoisie contributed least to the new, 'humanist', public school personality: its repression and puritanism; the aristocracy most: its arrogance and amateurism' (52).

Within this accommodation 'the mystique of aristocracy' was retained as the dominant cultural and ideological frame; so that in the 'intoxicating climax' of late nineteenth century imperial expansion the ideological frame was conditioned by notions of national and racial superiority which gave a particular cast to the 'public school personality' and its 'gentlemanly' character. Following 'three centuries of plunder and annexation' Britain's imperial economy had reached its zenith by the end of the nineteenth century. The mercantile imperialism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, having created the pre-conditions for rapid economic expansion in the early nineteenth century, gave way to the mid-nineteenth century 'diplomatic-industrial' form of imperialism (Britain's capacity to enforce international Free Trade ensured its world economic supremacy), and subsequently to the final form of 'military-industrial' imperialism arising in the 1880s. This

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<sup>20</sup> Anderson, 32-3.

'apparent apotheosis of British capitalism' gave, according to Anderson, a characteristic style to the whole society – 'consecrating and fossilizing to this day its interior space, its ideological horizons, its diffused and intimate sensibility' (34). Compounded by the failure of 'any significant body of intellectuals' to mount any convincing political/ideological opposition until the very end of the nineteenth century, the 'suffocating "traditionalism" of English life' prevailed. 'The reflux of imperialism at home not merely preserved but reinforced and sanctified the already pronounced personality type of the governing class: aristocratic, amateur, and 'normatively' agrarian' (34).

A particular instance of a mid-nineteenth century government strategy designed to strengthen the hold of the landed class upon a key lever of administrative and imperial power by means of political intervention in the field of higher education and professional training was the Northcott-Trevelyan reform of 1854, initiated by Gladstone but carried out by a 'New Breed' of Oxford-trained reformers under the powerful tutelage of Benjamin Jowett.<sup>21</sup> The reformers were hostile to the Benthamite, 'modernising' system of high-level administrative training for the Indian Civil Service (ICS) which had been established in 1906 at the East India Company's training college at Haileybury. Unlike at Oxbridge, where the curriculum was still largely based around the mental training of the classics, this professional level training was pitched at a very high level that was relevant to the job it prepared for, the curriculum consisting of Politics ('general polity'), Law and Political Economy, Indian languages and classical subjects.<sup>22</sup> The college was considered an 'intellectual power-house'; serious efforts had been made to attract the highest quality of teachers, who included Malthus, Sir James Stephen (Virginia Woolf's great uncle), and Sir James MacIntosh; and, as part of Benthamite initiatives which had been gaining ground since the 1830s and 40s, it was geared to produce civil servants along similar lines to those developed for training the French and German bureaucracies (in effect a British

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<sup>21</sup> Gowan, P. 1987. 'The Origins of an Administrative Elite', *New Left Review* No 162.

<sup>22</sup> Gowan quotes an Oxford-trained Sanskrit scholar's experience of the Haileybury training: there was 'nothing to equal' the demands of the mental training; by comparison his previous work at Oxford had been 'child's play'. The training was considered to be superior to that provided for the home civil service.

*Ecole Polytechnique*).<sup>23</sup> The reform, which abolished Haileybury College and replaced it with a post-Oxbridge exam-based training, was designed to open the ICS fully to Oxbridge graduates, and although couched in the meritocratic language of widening the intake of trainees from outside the civil service, it had the effect of making a decisive political break with the meritocratically-oriented Benthamite conception of education and training, and of strengthening the hold on administrative power of the landed classes. At the same time it had the required outcome, desired by its instigators, of blocking a potential route of entry into power for the middle classes (by side-stepping Oxbridge).

#### **4) Male scholarship in France and England**

It is useful to compare Woolf's critique of elite male scholarship and those forms of knowledge and academic authority which she defines as specifically masculine with Bourdieu's similarly wide-ranging critique in the 1980s of the power of the professors in France: despite many obvious differences there are certain significant similarities of approach and purpose. In *Homo Academicus* (1984) Bourdieu writes as an academic insider (however marginalized because of his oppositional stance) – a male sociologist, already possessing some academic renown, who as part of a lifelong anthropological/sociological enquiry into the structures which underlie the culture and traditions of his own society, undertakes to analyse, using objectifying methods, the hierarchies which structure his own, academic profession. Woolf's fictionalised and discursive accounts of the male academic world are told from the perspective of an excluded female outsider. Despite their very different starting points the common ground between these two enquiring writers is that, sharing a critical and satirical perspective on the elite academic world, each develops a distinctive insider/outsider approach to anatomise it as an aspect of their own culture, using the distancing eye of the auto-

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<sup>23</sup> Gowan notes that Benthamism had been popular with sections of the propertied classes; against the background of the French Revolution and the industrial revolution, it offered a reformist alternative to Jacobinism (21, 31).

ethnographer to 'exoticise' a familiar, close-at-hand world, the better to objectify and analyse it critically.<sup>24</sup>

Bourdieu's critical account of power structures in the French academic world, takes as its focus a historical moment – Paris 1968 and its aftermath – when intense ideological differences between political factions, between academic disciplines in a fiercely contested hierarchy, broke out in open strife: a moment when an explicit generational struggle between an established Old Guard and a challenging cohort of marginalized champions of dissent was played out in the public arena of struggle over university reform. Bourdieu's overall purpose in this text is twofold: to demonstrate how academic power is structured according to traditional hierarchies which serve to perpetuate the dominance of ruling elites in the academic world and in the existing social order; and on the basis of this analysis to question the authority of academic knowledge as legitimized by the hierarchized structure of a closed world of elitism and privilege which ultimately derives its power from an economic system based on capitalist relations of production. Bourdieu does not attempt to conceal the fact that he is an insider taking up an oppositional position in relation to an established set of institutions within which he himself, as a practising academic, is strategically positioned; on the contrary, he quite deliberately assumes and owns that position while taking great pains to devise a method of analysis capable of objectifying his enquiry. His method of analysis firstly subjects the academic field to systematic classification according to a matrix of power relations (historically described and understood, and intimately known to him as an insider); and secondly, he applies his own theory of practice to this specific field, whereby the actions of the actors in the academic field are analysed in terms of their commitment to the *illusio*, the social game in which they find themselves taking part. In addition, to approach as far as possible to the ideal of scientific objectivity, he submits himself to a 'social self-analysis' as a safeguard

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<sup>24</sup> Clifford Geertz's *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973) is another piece of common ground in that both would share Geertz's semiotic concept of culture and his sense of its explication as 'construing social expressions on their surface enigmatical'. 'Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture', 5.



against, and a further means of distancing himself, from the 'inherent complicity' of involvement in the *ilusão* of the academic 'social game'.

The sociologist who would study his own world (in its nearest and most familiar aspects) should not, as the ethnologist would, domesticate the exotic, but should exoticise the domestic through a break with his own relation of intimacy with these modes of life and thought.<sup>25</sup>

Bourdieu's analysis focuses particularly on the complex dynamics of power relations in an academic field which is characterised by competing structures of hierarchisation: between hierarchies of disciplines; between factions with different affiliations to political, social and cultural sources of power; between individuals occupying positions of differential power and influence; between competing cults of academic excellence (e.g. incandescent *brilliance* versus the dour reliability of *le sérieux*); and between a thrusting younger generation and an older, defensive, time-serving one. In sum, he defines the field as 'that site of permanent rivalry for the truth of the social world and of the academic world itself' (xiii). His purpose then is to anatomise a world of privilege and authority which seeks to perpetuate itself rather than to advance scientific knowledge, which relies on the inertia of established tradition to create the illusion of unassailable authority and permanence, and on the mystique of rites of institution and consecration (akin to religious rites administered by a priestly caste) to consolidate and elaborate hierarchical divisions in the system.

There are interesting parallels in Woolf's account of the elite English academic system, especially in the emphasis she puts on the central role played by religion and its rites in sanctifying and preserving privilege and hierarchy. In the distinctly non-republican English system, Anglican clergymen created a dominant ethos in public schools and Oxbridge, which became a model for emulation by schools and colleges throughout the national system.<sup>26</sup> Both *Jacob's Room* and *The Waves* contain many examples of the role played by Anglican ritual in inculcating traditional values and consecrating formative moments in the making of masculine self-identity. In these texts and elsewhere, Woolf repeatedly

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<sup>25</sup> Bourdieu, 1998. *Homo Academicus*, Preface, xi.

<sup>26</sup> Resisting reform, aspects of this elite system survive into the twenty-first century.

draws attention to ritual aspects of men's progress in the 'procession' of educational and professional achievement: language marking rites of passage is thick with patriotic sentiment, biblical imagery and liturgical rhythm; schoolmasters and university dons wear black robes and officiate like a priestly caste; public servants officiate at state and institutional ceremonials wearing elaborate costumes denoting arcane duties and hierarchy. Woolf positions the narrator on the outside of these events, looking on with uncomprehending wonder at the strange, 'savage' even, ritual ceremonies at church, school and university. 'In what orderly procession they advance. Thick wax candles stand upright; young men rise in white gowns; while the subservient eagle bears up for inspection the great white book' (*JR* 38). 'And still the tradition, or belief, lingers among us [excluded women] that to express worth of any kind, whether intellectual or moral, by wearing pieces of metal, or ribbon, coloured hoods or gowns, is a barbarity which we bestow upon the rites of savages' (*Three Guineas* 137). The pastiche of the Western European anthropologist observing strange customs of primitive people is most developed in *Three Guineas*, but the technique appears in Woolf's earliest writing and is refined and sharpened as her stylistic repertoire expands.

Bourdieu's comedy is also sharp and dark. The epigraph for *Homo Academicus* is a 'comic scenario' derived from classical French corrective comedy – 'Don Juan deceived. The miser robbed'; the aim being to 'trap Homo Academicus, the supreme classifier among classifiers, in the net of his own classifications' (xi). In a move of authorial positioning similar to Woolf's, Bourdieu also subversively reverses the hitherto standard anthropological relationship, while acknowledging the risks taken by the 'sorcerer's apprentice' who looks into 'native sorcery and its fetishes instead of departing to seek in tropical climes the comforting charms of exotic magic'. He 'must expect to see turned against him the violence he has unleashed'; thus he must protect himself by determinedly reinforcing the scientificity of his methods.<sup>27</sup> Woolf, in her time, also sought, not always

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<sup>27</sup> In *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Bourdieu details the principles of 'objectification' whereby the subjective distortion of the observer is minimized: any scientific research is 'partial and false so

successfully, to deflect expected hostile reactions to *Three Guineas*, half-concealing in the text a pastiche of academic procedures. The complex epistolary structure of interlocking letters and drafts of letters to a correspondent supported by a very large apparatus of end-notes seems intentionally hard to decipher, and is perhaps perversely successful in reproducing the experience of confused exasperation felt by a neophyte attempting to break the male academic code. She had already in *A Room Of One's Own* disarmed hostile reactions from defensive male readers by means of the charmingly playful style of the text,<sup>28</sup> even when she expressed scorn for male academics who redoubled their efforts to prove women's intellectual inferiority as justification for their continued exclusion at a time when their own male privileges were becoming increasingly open to challenge.<sup>29</sup> Academic obfuscation is dutifully replicated in different register in the popular media. Anyone scanning the daily paper, Woolf asserts, could not fail to be aware of a system of masculine domination and proprietorship, legitimated and generalised by the authority and power of the professor, and extended throughout society.

England is under the rule of a patriarchy. Nobody could fail to detect the dominance of the professor. His was the power and the money and the influence. He was the proprietor of the paper and its editor and sub-editor. He was the Foreign Secretary and the Judge. He was the cricketer; he owned the racehorses and the yachts. He was the director of the company that pays two hundred percent to its shareholders. He left millions to charities and colleges that were ruled by himself (30).

In both *Jacob's Room* and *A Room Of One's Own* Woolf locates herself spatially outside Oxbridge, looking in. In the former text, she does so as a ghostly, veiled narrator haunting the quadrangles in pursuit of Jacob. She observes 'the lamps of learning', the Cambridge Professors dispensing cake and erudite talk to undergraduates late into the night – 'how priestly they look! How like a suburb where you go to see a view and eat a special cake! "We are the sole purveyors of this cake".' One of them plaits garlands out of young manliness while he discourses: 'twining stiff fibres of awkward speech – things

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long as it fails to include the point of view from which it speaks, and so fails to construct the game as a whole' (12).

<sup>28</sup> Woolf's strategies of concealment in these two texts are discussed in Chapter 2.

<sup>29</sup> Thus proving the correctness of the recognition that the forms which masculinity takes (and the defensive postures adopted) tend historically to be reactive to changing definitions of femininity (Kimmel in Horlacher (ed.) 2011, 90). Woolf also recognised this historical truth as she made clear in *A Room Of One's Own*, as for instance in her suggestion that 'The history of men's opposition to women's emancipation is more interesting perhaps than the story of that emancipation itself' (51).

young men blurted out – plaiting them round his own smooth garland, making the bright side show, the vivid greens, the sharp thorns, manliness'. Another, 'Virgil's representative among us', sips port, tells stories and intones Latin 'as if language were wine upon his lips', though his day job is merely as assessor: 'ruling lines between names, hanging lists above doors' (50-53). This is an enclosed homosocial world protected and muffled by 'the swaddlings and blanketings of the Cambridge night'. Knowledge and traditions are passed mystically from generation to generation as if from a pulpit (57).<sup>30</sup>

##### **5) Jacob and Percival as anti-heroes: masculine formation in *Jacob's Room* and *The Waves***

Both novels are structured around the coming of age and early death of male anti-heroes, each of whom exhibits classic features of hegemonic English 'gentlemanly' masculinity, and each also acts as a symbolic representative of a particular class segment of their generation. The novels show certain aspects of their growth and development, symbolically foregrounding their early demise against a modern age backdrop of imperialism and war. The powerful emotional and biographical background to the construction of these young men of promise as enigmatic, unknowable figures, who inspire both love and a certain fear or dread, is the shaping of their fictional construction by the experience of Thoby Stephen's death (Virginia's older brother) following a family trip to Greece in 1906. Woolf's biographers (e.g. Lee, Gordon, Briggs) suggest that, further distanced from her 'reserved' brother by the gulf of gendered separation in education – although (while adding to the sense of loss) this inequity was somewhat compensated for by the emergent intellectual equality and personal intimacy fostered between the Stephen sisters and Thoby's male Cambridge friends in the early Bloomsbury period -- Virginia transmuted her loss and her felt ignorance of her brother's lived experience into these emblematic portraits of Jacob and Percival. 'Thoby had been

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<sup>30</sup> In *The Waves* Louis has a similar epiphany of interpellation conveyed from the pulpit in the headmaster's sermon. See Section (9) below.

a reserved young man, and Virginia pursued his unknown ghost through two novels, trying to deduce Jacob from his room, Percival from his friends'.<sup>31</sup>

Each of these fictionalised versions of Thoby's 'unknown ghost' is, in different ways, a strangely chilling yet compelling representative of his generation and of a specific, historically defined, model of masculinity; partly for this reason the origins and destiny of both remain deliberately obscure. The portraits of Jacob and Percival are constructed using conventionalised materials – typical, symbolically significant and immediately recognisable masculine characteristics. While Percival is a hegemonic stereotype, Jacob's status is ambivalent – his performance and posture vacillate between gentlemanly distinction and gawky, youthful awkwardness. Whereas there is hardly any discernable development in the already formed character of Percival: his physical presence is heavy and lumbering; his manner seems alternately good-humoured, overbearing, and remote; while his progress through school and university to an early death is magisterial and unquestioning. Jacob, by contrast, both makes himself and is formed by and within the culture and history of the moment in which he finds himself. 'I am what I am, and intend to be it,' for which there will be no form in the world unless Jacob makes one for himself (44).

The premise of Jacob's *Bildung* is unhinged by his semi-absent presence throughout the novel and by the culminating shock of his final absence, the emptiness of the space he once occupied. The symbolism of his non-return from Flanders (his namesake and nemesis) abolishes any prospect of his emerging as achieved exponent of his culture or worthy inheritor of masculine tradition. While Gadamer's concept of *Bildung* involves 'rising up' to a universal ideal of what it is to be truly human,<sup>32</sup> given the historical specificity of its roots in Kantian idealism, this universalising concept of 'humanity' is unquestioningly assumed to be masculine – according to a traditional 'logic of unmarked universality' which makes a generalised equation of 'man' with the universal category of

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<sup>31</sup> Gordon 2006, 151.

<sup>32</sup> Gadamer, xii, xiii.

the 'human'.<sup>33</sup> The form of the novel thus negates not only the conventions and expectations of the *Bildungsroman* as genre but also questions the premise of *Bildung* as an individual process of self-construction within a traditional masculine mould. Woolf's feminist slant in representing the disparate forces (both institutional and accidental) shaping Jacob's development and forming his identity gives her strategic distance both from the traditional model of *Bildung* (whose framework she both makes use of and departs from), and from the dominant model of masculinity, with its underlying assumptions, which is the prime target of her (characteristically indirect) attack. The off-stage obliteration of Jacob undercuts the expectation of his promise – however ambiguous and uncertain the realisation of his potential is already presented as being – and makes of *Jacob's Room* a deliberate subversion of the tradition of *Bildung* and of the processes of heroic masculine formation which it demands. Despite the cultural and historical distance between the schools of thought represented by Gadamer and Bourdieu, in this context both of their formulations of cultural formation are valuable for the light they throw on Woolf's methods. 'Become what you are' is, for Bourdieu, a principle behind the 'social magic of all acts of institution': a principle which guarantees individual agency within the structured and structuring system which both shapes and is shaped by the actions of individuals.<sup>34</sup> Jacob's formation, his *Bildung* – such development of his selfhood and identity as is shown in the novel – both illustrates and subverts the traditional neo-Kantian 'rising up to humanity through culture', as defined by Gadamer; while the fine balance achieved by Woolf in his characterisation, between conformity and recalcitrant resistance to conformity, can also be seen – in a very different way – as illustrative of Bourdieu's account of how normative dispositions are acquired through a process both of acquiescence and resistance to a set of hegemonic cultural norms.

Bourdieu's account of negotiation and construction of gendered identity perhaps more readily lends itself to a detailed reading of the processes of gendered formation, inculcation and performance undergone by the six characters in *The Waves*, and lived out

<sup>33</sup> Karreman, I. 2011. 'Augustan Manliness and its Anxieties' in Horlacher, 112.

<sup>34</sup> Bourdieu, 1991. *Language and Symbolic Power*, 122.

under the rise and fall of the masculine hegemony represented by Percival. The careers of the male characters, Louis, Neville and Bernard, lived in the shadow of Percival's life and death, are deliberately plotted through the specifically masculine lifelong 'procession' of submission and achievement according to a set of norms, inculcated and performed in the nursery, at school and university, and in professional careers. In *The Waves* as well, a parallel, specifically female developmental process over a natural life cycle, is also plotted, comparing the lives of Susan, Jinny and Rhoda, lived and performed within and against a differently coded but analogous set of norms (of more or less dutiful submission according to the requirements of the same hegemonic model of masculinity), whereby their roles and activities are confined within a domestic, female sphere.

The elegiac nature of both *Jacob's Room* and *The Waves* coheres around a central narrative strategy which purports to plot conventionally heroic masculine progress through life, but which in the cases of Jacob and Percival leads only to the dramatic irony of unfulfilled promise and early death. Whereas *Jacob's Room* traces Jacob's development from childhood to manhood, a development which culminates in his arrival in Greece where his beautiful manliness and his unknowable personality become monumental like the statues to which he is frequently compared, Percival is already fully formed as a monumental and representative model when he first appears in *The Waves*. Jacob's likeness to a classical Greek statue foreshadows Percival's petrified monumental masculinity – In the development of Woolf's portraiture of hegemonic masculine character Percival takes over where Jacob leaves off.

#### **6) From the outside looking in: female narration of Jacob's *Bildung***

Woolf represents Jacob's emergence into maturity using a new style of writing – a style which deliberately departs from the conventions (rejected as 'masculine') of Arnold Bennett and the Edwardian 'materialists'. In *Jacob's Room* Woolf, by her own account, found her own voice for the first time, a mode of writing which becomes characteristic

thereafter.<sup>35</sup> Narrative plot (the 'and then ....' narrative of *Night and Day*)<sup>36</sup> gives way to a different kind of narration which seeks to represent experience as conveyed and refracted by memory, perception, by a multiplicity of different viewpoints, and by chance. The fact-laden narrative conventions of Edwardian realism are replaced by a fragmentary and impressionistic style – a rendering of Woolf's own principles worked out in her essays on writing ('Modern Fiction', 'Women and Fiction') and in her quarrel with Bennett and the Edwardians.<sup>37</sup> A reversal of dominant literary values is accompanied by subversion of traditional genre: in *Jacob's Room* the form of the *Bildungsroman* is reduced to a shadow of itself.<sup>38</sup> Conceived by Woolf herself as a form with 'no scaffolding', the novel, as Little comments, is 'held together by the shadowy structure of the very thing that it is against: the *Bildungsroman*'. Woolf wilfully desists from fulfilling expectations: 'Jacob's education is something that barely happens to him, yet all the scenery is there ... for the awakening of his mind and for his rebelling against stodgy traditions. ... [O]pportunity after opportunity is supplied [yet the author] deliberately makes Jacob look the other way, or she mocks the offered moment' (109).

Jacob's failure to grasp the fruits of privileged access to elite education, his insouciant youthful indifference and preference for friendship and pleasure rather than dedicated scholarship, his choice of women as mentors and sentimental educators rather than learned male guides or tutors, and his haphazard visit to Greece – all combine to disqualify him from fulfilling the conventional requirements for a cultivated, aesthetic *Bildung* associated with the tradition of the Grand Tour. At the same time the deliberate refusal of the narrative to make him known or knowable disallow the reader from gauging his success in achieving either cultivated selfhood or an accommodation with tradition. The 'example' provided by his father, the deceased Seabrook Flanders, remains mysterious – while his sons could both become 'something', what their father had been is

<sup>35</sup> 'I have found out how to begin (at 40) to say something in my own voice.' Diary vol. II, 208.

<sup>36</sup> Gordon 2006, 214.

<sup>37</sup> Woolf argues that fiction written by a woman is likely to 'alter the established values – to make serious what appears insignificant to a man, and trivial what to him is important'. 'Women and Fiction', 86.

<sup>38</sup> Little, J. 1981. 'Jacob's Room as Comedy: Woolf's Parodic *Bildungsroman*' in *New Feminist Essays on Virginia Woolf* ed. Marcus, J., 105.



not at all clear – ‘Had he, then, been nothing? An unanswerable question...’ (15). Such questions are repeatedly posed – both about his origins and his own young death (an event which is indirectly alluded to throughout the novel but never directly presented or stated). As representative of the proportion of a whole generation who enlisted and did not return from the trenches, Jacob’s unrecorded fate raises other questions: ‘What for? What for?’ Jacob never asked himself any such question. [...] He was young – a man. [...] At forty it might be a different matter’ (225). Observing Jacob’s uncertain and inconsistent progress through the courts of Cambridge, Woolf’s questioning, often puzzled and unconvinced narrator mocks the anachronistic form, the backward-looking ideology and the homosocial cosiness of his education. His schooling is only mentioned in passing; his formative years at Cambridge feature more for the friendships he establishes than the influence of ‘the lights of learning’: the professors, with whom he is not shown as establishing any relationship of tutelage. The deliberate incoherence in Jacob’s development emphasises other factors, not traditionally included in the *Bildungsroman* genre, as being important in shaping Jacob’s identity and marking out his destiny. To some extent the shattered form of the novel achieves what Bourdieu admired in Woolf’s capacity to render absurd the social complicity involved in conventional patterns of behaviour and in the standard trajectory of a conventional career. The action (of a scene, of a whole novel) is broken down ‘into a series of snapshots, destroying the design, the intention, which, like the thread of discourse, would unify the representation, and reduces the acts and actors to absurdity’.<sup>39</sup> Thus Jacob is given a partially erased heritage and an obscured destiny. His fate is indicated throughout but is only ever obliquely addressed – a ‘voiding topic’ as Gillian Beer describes this technique.<sup>40</sup> However, another logic does emerge from the sequence of seemingly disconnected experience – in part a product of ‘the difference of view’ which a percipient female observer (the author) and a series of female mentors (Jacob’s lovers) bring into the picture.

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<sup>39</sup> Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 67.

<sup>40</sup> Beer, 1996. ‘The Body of the People: Mrs Dalloway to *The Waves*’ in *The Common Ground*, 53.

The bare outline of his formation (at the hands of male mentors) is actually quite conventional: the standard stages of a privileged young man's education. Private Latin lessons from an Anglican clergyman prepare him for public school; university education at Cambridge, apparently studying literature (his reading focusing particularly on 'the Elizabethans')<sup>41</sup> precedes some kind of clerical work and freelance literary journalism in London; before enlisting he goes alone on a tour (paid for by a legacy) by train through Italy to Greece. However, it is in terms of Jacob's emerging gendered identity that his *Bildung* is unconventional and comes closer to Bourdieu's model of *Bildung* as the acquisition of gendered *habitus*. Alongside these conventional stages of masculine formation, Jacob is also formed emotionally and educated in 'the rules of behaviour' (203) through his association with a series of women who act as female mentors of his sentimental education.<sup>42</sup> Apart from his mother's attentions, the first hint of this alternative female influence is the old woman who lives alone on the moor, whom Jacob visits on childhood expeditions in search of moths and butterflies.<sup>43</sup> As a young man, a series of more or less significant encounters with women mark stages in his progress towards independent selfhood: an unspoken and un-fulfillable engagement to Clara Dunnant; sexual initiation with Florinda who also teaches him the rites of betrayal, jealousy and 'street love'<sup>44</sup>; a visit to a prostitute; an affair with the artists' model, Fanny Elmer; and an enlightening encounter with an older, married woman, Sandra Wentworth-Williams. This latter encounter enlarges his stay in Greece – not to the dimensions of a 'Grand Tour' (for his experience is bathetic by contrast to this ideal stage of *Bildung*, marked as it is by 'an intolerable weariness – sitting in hotels by oneself and looking at monuments' (187)), but

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<sup>41</sup> His reading, from the evidence of the books in his room, appears rather closer to Woolf's own range of reading, rather than a range dictated by an Oxbridge curriculum; unlike Neville's (in *The Waves*), it is not based on the Classics.

<sup>42</sup> Jacob's 'sentimental education', his *Bildung* through learning from women, appears to owe something to Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749), referred to as 'that mystic book' (JR 168).

<sup>43</sup> Jacob's interest in moths, as a young naturalist, is one of many discernable characteristics which link him to Woolf's elder brother, Thoby.

<sup>44</sup> Cf Woolf's discussion of 'street love' in *The Pargiters* (as discussed in Chapter 3); Florinda flirts with other men while she is Jacob's lover.

enlarging in terms of the development of his self-knowledge through a larger cultural and spiritual induction at the hands of an aristocratic<sup>45</sup> and knowledgeable woman:

Mrs Williams said things straight out. He was surprised by his own knowledge of the rules of behaviour; how much more can be said than one thought; how open one can be with a woman; and how little he had known himself before (203).

Greece is the making of Jacob in more ways than one. In a further twist in Woolf's subversive rendering of her protagonist's *Bildung*, the final stages of his progress are minutely observed by women who have fallen prey to Hellenistic fantasies of manly beauty:

... it is the governesses who start the Greek myth. Look at that for a head (they say) – nose, you see, straight as a dart, curls, eye-brows – everything appropriate to manly beauty; while his legs and arms have lines on them which indicate a perfect degree of development (189).

In Woolf's allusively constructed portrait of Jacob, she, as author, joins the female admirers of Jacob in the novel (Fanny Elmer pining his absence in front of the Phidian head of the 'battered Ulysses' in the British Museum feels 'a fresh shock of Jacob's presence' (238); 'Sandra Williams got Jacob's head exactly on a level with the head of the Hermes of Praxiteles' in the museum at Olympia (200); a Frenchwoman captures his image with her camera on the Acropolis) and makes play with Jacob's comely likeness to Greek statues. Woolf places him in the midday sun 'in the quarry where the Greeks had cut marble for the theatre at Olympia': 'Composed, commanding, contemptuous, a little melancholy, and bored with an august kind of boredom, there he sat smoking his pipe' (p. 200). Soon after, he is found on the Parthenon studying the finished and unfinished aspects of statues. 'And the Greeks, like sensible men, never bothered to finish the backs of their statues,' said Jacob, shading his eyes and observing that the side of the figure which is turned away from view is left in the rough (206).

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<sup>45</sup> This is suggested by the 'simple' picture she gives him of her background: 'She had been left motherless at the age of four; and the Park was vast. [...] Of course there was the library, and dear Mr Jones, and notions about things' and the implied knowledge she acquired, sitting on the butler's knee in the kitchen (202).

Having admired the 'silent composure' of the Parthenon – 'which is so vigorous that, far from being decayed, the Parthenon appears, on the contrary, likely to outlast the entire world', Jacob turns his attention to the Caryatids holding the roof of the Erechtheum on their heads, but is discomposed by a French tourist: 'Madame Lucien Grave perched on a block of marble with her Kodak pointed at his head' (209).

'Damn these women! ... How they spoil things. ... It is those damned women,' said Jacob, without any trace of bitterness, but rather with sadness and disappointment that what might have been should never be (209-10).

Jacob's sense of his manhood, his understanding of his place in the world, and of his culture's role in forming him, are – he seems to acknowledge – conditioned by his relationship to women. Sandra Wentworth-Williams oversees Jacob's accession to a spiritual and physical manhood in an impromptu Grand Tour finale – their moonlight tryst on the Acropolis. However, she is by no means confident that he is the gentleman he seems; spying him wandering alone in Athens she wonders whether he really is as 'distinguished' as he looks, for he also looks like a 'bumpkin'. This is a variation on the theme of Jacob's not quite achieved gentlemanly maturity, which recurs throughout the novel – the note of puzzled unease produced by the impression he gives of being 'awkward yet distinguished-looking' (81); like 'a Margate fisherman out of a job, or a British Admiral' (206). There is also an occasional hint that there is something untamed, even 'savage', about him.<sup>46</sup> His arrival in Greece marks his about-to-be-achieved manhood – 'For he had grown to be a man, and was about to be immersed in things (p. 191). The enigma of Jacob is perhaps also that had he lived he might have continued in recalcitrant resistance to masculine conformity.

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<sup>46</sup> In portraying Jacob's gawky athleticism Woolf here perhaps plays with a question (which is central to the process of *Bildung*): the extent to which human character/personality can be understood to be made or given: how far Jacob's 'natural' raw material can be cultivated and socialized; how far his masculinity is aberrant (maybe even 'savage'), and how far it might be tamed by training, education, experience or the tutelage and love of women. In *Jacob's Room* Woolf does not make direct links between attributes marked as 'masculine' (aggression; predatory sexuality) and 'instincts' said to be indications of 'savagery', as she does in later texts such as *Three Guineas*.

## 7) The formation of gendered identity in *The Waves*

Because Woolf's techniques in the novel which she called her 'play-poem' are suggestive rather than analytical, it is undoubtedly the case that the text is open to a broad range of interpretations – of this there is ample evidence in the large critical literature on *The Waves* and in the divergent readings which have been made of a highly experimental novel.<sup>47</sup> Commentators trace the origins and founding idea of the novel to its author's early vision in the autumn of 1926 of an 'eye-less' and 'semi-mystical work', through the long process of its composition, to the culmination of a late draft in February 1931, when the last section, Bernard's final speech, was completed. The interpretation set out here, of Woolf's representation of the formation over time of gender identities, is based on close reading of the text and draws on a range of critical commentaries (e.g. Beer, Flint, Mepham, Marcus) and biographies (e.g. Gordon, Briggs), and especially on Bourdieu's *Masculine Domination* (which itself includes extensive illustrative discussion of *To The Lighthouse*). It seeks to explore the extent to which Woolf's intricate tracing in *The Waves* of the formation of gendered identity through a process of repetitive 'accretion' of self-definition and identification, is illustrative of the processes theorized by Bourdieu of the 'acquisition of durable dispositions' within the domains of what he defined as a specifically male or female *habitus*. Reading *The Waves* in the light of a supposed 'affinity' between Woolf and Bourdieu (Reed-Danahay) in terms of an assumed shared understanding of what Bourdieu calls the 'transhistorical invariants of the relationship between the "genders"',<sup>48</sup> and drawing at the same time on the insights of the sociology of gender relations of the late twentieth century, offers the prospect of exploring in a new way the representation of the gendered formation of both women and men (with, in this case, a

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<sup>47</sup> Mepham (1991) comments of *The Waves*: 'Of all Virginia Woolf's novels it is the one which has most often been read as mythic, and been interpreted in terms of mythic schemes and meanings' (140).

<sup>48</sup> 'In bringing to light the transhistorical invariants of the relationship between the 'genders', historical study is obliged to take for its object the historical labour of dehistoricization which has continuously produced and reproduced them, in other words, the constant work of *differentiation* to which men and women have never ceased to be subject and which leads them to distinguish themselves by masculinizing or feminizing themselves. In particular it should aim to describe and analyse the endlessly renewed social (re)construction of the principles of vision and division that generate 'genders' and, more broadly, the various categories of sexual practices (heterosexual and homosexual in particular), heterosexuality itself being socially constructed and socially constituted as the universal standard of any 'normal' sexual practice, i.e. one that has been rescued from the ignominy of the 'unnatural.' Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, 2001, 84.

particular focus on masculine formation) within the carefully constructed formal framework which Woolf devised to contain her 'vision'. Woolf's perspective in this novel seems to include the possibility that gendered identity remains relatively fluid and indeterminate, while at the same time conventional masculine and feminine characteristics serve to differentiate identities according to well established traditional patterns. While this tension is not clearly resolved within the scheme of the novel, and has given rise to interpretations which emphasise Woolf's interest in androgyny, it indicates her concern to demonstrate the relational character of gendered identity – and this is also a fundamental feature of current theories of gender and power.

Much has been written about the highly unusual language of *The Waves*, including descriptions of the curious, incantatory, repetitive quality of the direct speech monologues which make up the chapters (the interludes between the chapters having a distinctive quality of their own as they minutely observe physical change in the natural world). In 'writing to a rhythm' rather than to the dictates of a conventional plot, Woolf distanced herself from conventional forms by turning novelistic form into what she termed a 'play-poem' containing elements of both drama and poetry. As one contemporary reviewer commented, 'It was so abstracted from all the usual material of the novel that it comes close to going out of bounds'.<sup>49</sup> The characters' thoughts are rendered – dramatised, as it were – as speech. As Beer puts it, the characters

speak with a liturgical separation, facing inward to the altar of the self or outward to the reader, but never in dialogue. [...] the silent voice upon the page allows consciousness to articulate itself with a clarity and panache rarely achieved in speech. [...] the voices assert their presences with all the cadences of speech, so far as syntax can represent them, but without tone, sound or utterance (65).

Mepham comments on the open artificiality of the language in the 'least mimetic, the least "realist"' of Woolf's novels' –

The voices do not correspond to any real possible form of speech, either inner or public. Their eloquent, poetic effusions are openly artificial. Like the abstract geometries of Kandinsky or the floating, dreamlike images of Chagall, they do not disguise the fact that they are made up, not copied from experience but fabricated by an artist (140).

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<sup>49</sup> Majumdar and McLaurin 1975, 273; quoted in Mepham 1991, 143.

Similarly, in the 'strange speeches' of the children in the first sections, Gordon suggests that rather than the 'quaint imitations of adult discourse' that one might expect to hear from children, Woolf instead devises a language 'in which the lonely unversed mind can formally declare itself', and thus 'bestows roundness and explicitness on pre-verbal thoughts' (270). Mephram also suggests that, in shaping the lives and consciousness of these characters according to patterns unknown to, or ignored by conventional biography, Woolf sought 'to highlight other, more subtle and hidden forces' which 'are mostly invisible to, and hence ignored by, biographers' (142). This artful quality combined with their liturgical and repetitive rhythms makes of the speeches a 'declarative discourse' through which 'repetition delineates personality' (Beer, 68, 70). Flint describes it in similar terms, but with the significant additional suggestion that Woolf's method is designed to represent processes of the formation of individual and gendered identity – 'the characters' self-definitions are always being proffered and tested against the awareness of flux [...] – it is through such accretion [...] that identity establishes itself' (xi).

What Beer describes as the 'declarative discourse' of the six (three male, three female) characters would thus seem to function as a kind of "thought-speech", which progressively through repetition and accretion, establishes each character's identity at significant stages of their lives in relation to their age group.<sup>50</sup> Woolf's representation of gender identity in the novel may therefore be conceived as a formative process of differentiation and identification unfolding over a lifetime of lived experience. This perspective accords with contemporary theories of gender relations, in which 'gender' is understood in the context of 'subjects continually negotiating and constructing their gender identities', and also as being 'not primarily a property of individuals, but a social construction in which social constructs of gender become internalized and engendered in individuals'.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Gordon sees Woolf's formal design for the novel and her use of the poetic conceit of human life as a single day, as a way of taking 'cross-sections' of the characters' lives at nine points in their life-span, each cross-section examining nature and human life under a particular angle of the sun as it traverses the sky (271).

<sup>51</sup> Brod, 2011, 28.

Furthermore, the incantatory, repetitive quality of the discourse, which seems to invest each segment of the soliloquys with the 'illocutionary force'<sup>52</sup> of an annunciation, suggests another parallel with the work of Bourdieu, specifically his work on language and the dynamics of symbolic power. Both Woolf and Bourdieu emphasize in their writing the role of priests, the liturgy and religious ceremony in consecrating and ritualizing those significant social acts which establish order and hierarchy in social life and its organization. In some respects, the peculiar quality of the "thought-speech" in *The Waves* approaches to, or renders a version of, what Bourdieu terms a language of 'consecration' in his formulation of the 'rites of institution' which accompany moments and ceremonies of social initiation and gendered inclusion and exclusion in the everyday '*illusio*' of social life, marking differences of gender, age and social standing. For Bourdieu, such 'institution' consecrates (gives sanction to and sanctifies) an established social order, and is analogous to acts of constitution in a legal or political sense -- for example, the investiture of a Knight, a Deputy, or a President, etc., which consists in 'sanctioning and sanctifying a difference (pre-existent or not) by making it *known* or *recognized*'. An act of institution is thus 'an act of social magic that can create difference *ex nihilo* or pre-existing differences as between sexes or age groups'; acts of institution having a 'magical' quality in their capacity to bring social difference into existence, making it known and recognized, and transforming both the representation which others have of it, and the behaviour which they adopt. Also of significance, in Bourdieu's scheme, for the purposes of this interpretation of Woolf's methods in *The Waves*, are the 'incorporated signs' which mark social position by highlighting distinctions/differences. External signs, such as decorations, uniforms, army stripes, insignia (such signs figure largely in Woolf's analysis in *Three Guineas* of the function of costume and regalia in masculine public display), are, in Bourdieu's view, less efficacious or 'convincing' for signifying social distinctions, than 'incorporated signs' ('such as manners, ways of speaking -- accent -- ways of walking or standing -- gait, posture, table manners etc, and taste'). These incorporated signs (of

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<sup>52</sup> Jonathan Potter (2001) on 'performatives' and 'constatives'; 'speech acts' and 'illocutionary force' -- 'whatever the sense and the reference of the words in the utterance, it is the force which makes it a particular act' (45).



which there are innumerable instances in *The Waves*) function as 'so many calls to order' reminding individuals of 'the position assigned to them by the institution'.<sup>53</sup>

As Bernard (the 'phrase-maker', the 'teller of stories') In his final monologue takes over the narrative, all six voices seem to be resolved/unified into his individual yet multiple voice -- the voice of Bernard 'seems to take over all the others, or at least their separate existence is thrown into doubt' (Mepham, 139). Beer emphasizes the special quality of Bernard's voice and language (the 'unreachable ideal language that Bernard always seeks') -- as he casts about in the unexplored territory of 'the new writing world of the body'. She also points to the rich tensions underlying the uncertainly gendered ownership of this final section and of much of the language throughout the novel:

In *The Waves* Woolf explores a new form of communality and impersonality. Words and thoughts in this work move freely between people; sexual images are not reserved in mind to men or women only. Bernard is the man writing women's writing written by the woman writer. [...] Though each person lives within a separate configuration, gender and personal history converge only evanescently in individuality (71).

In emphasising the novel's 'mythic' and 'mystical' aspects, some commentators<sup>54</sup> take as their starting point Woolf's conception of the novel at an early stage of its composition -- as representing the 'semimystic very profound life of a woman' (Diary, 23 November 1926) -- and interpret it as an actualization of her notion of the 'androgynous mind', as elaborated in *A Room Of One's Own* (1929). In these readings, Bernard's androgynous capacity to unify/subsume all six characters' selfhoods within his own single selfhood represents an aspect of this earlier conception of the novel's design. Beer, however, as well as acknowledging these mystical elements, notes the novel's connection to Woolf's speeches and writing 'during a highly political phase' (xii) in her career, and particularly to the speech which became the essay 'Professions for Women'. In that essay Woolf 'figures the imagination as a woman, fishing' --

The unchecked, suffusive power of the imagination explores like fish and fisher at once. [...] By going down in *The Waves* into 'the world that lies submerged in our unconscious being' and by sustaining the evenness of a dream state, 'her artist's

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<sup>53</sup> Bourdieu, 1991. *Language and Symbolic Power*, 119, 123.

<sup>54</sup> E.g. Jacobus, 1995, Minow-Pinkney, 1987.

state of unconsciousness', Woolf seeks to escape the narrow bounds of social realism which, she perceives, is functioning as a form of censorship. She has found a language and a rhythm that will be less 'impeded by the extreme conventionality of the other sex'. But it is not a language that excludes 'the other sex': the six speakers of the book, three male, three female, often stand separate from each other but are as often allied across gender. They share sensory experience, though they are later sorted socially (xiv).

My reading of gender formation in *The Waves*, and particularly of the various depictions of masculine performance, focuses on what Beer refers to as the 'social sorting' of the male and female characters, a process which, as Gordon suggests, Woolf treats with most originality when the characters reach maturity.<sup>55</sup> Separately gendered schooling, after an intimate, communal early life in nursery and garden, undoubtedly differentiates the six characters' gendered identity, but this is rendered in the text mainly through broadly described institutionalizing and regimenting processes. It is in the sometimes vivid individuality of the choices and efforts made by the characters in adulthood to define and understand their gendered selfhood (I wish to argue) that Woolf most closely captures in fictional representation, what has since become a foundational aspect of feminist understanding: 'the fundamental feminist idea that in naming 'gender' we are naming not just difference, but differences of power'.<sup>56</sup>

The existence of patriarchies (systems of power favouring men over women) is implicit throughout the text of *The Waves*, and is conveyed through a variety of rhetorical devices. One such is the dominant but silent presence of Percival in alliance with and leadership of, the marching ranks of 'boasting boys' who deploy seamlessly from the playing fields of the public schools to the European fields of war. Percival's ambivalent presence stands somewhere behind, or beyond, the flux of daily life wherein the individual characters develop differentially gendered selves. His hegemonic influence coheres into collectivity the male characters at school and university, and unifies all six characters on the two

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<sup>55</sup> Gordon sees the first stage of their development (originally titled 'Prelude') as being derivative of the Romantics' view (and especially of Wordsworth's vision in *Intimations of Immortality*) of early stages of childhood development. For Gordon, it is only in the fifth cross-section, when the six characters come to maturity, that Woolf's treatment of their development becomes 'wholly original' (271). See note 47 above.

<sup>56</sup> Brod 2011, 26.

celebratory occasions when they meet to salute his departure and then to mourn his death. Another means whereby Woolf implies an underlying patriarchal system of masculine domination (which is put in question, but only momentarily, by the death of Percival), is through the half-submerged presence woven into the texture of the novel of a powerful set of repeated images and echoes of a specifically masculine, imperial ordering of the world and its subjects according to a historically belated conception of racial and social hierarchy, imperial dominion and military domination. Jane Marcus refers to this layered texture of images and ideas as 'the submerged mind of empire' which inflects and informs the text.<sup>57</sup> If the openly artificial, declarative discourse of the characters' speeches is in some respects analogous to the 'speech acts' upon which rests the special authority with which Bourdieu invests his concept of 'rites of institution', then Marcus's 'submerged mind of empire' can perhaps be considered as a manifestation of a more diffused form of power, an ideological frame or 'mindset' which shapes individuals' psychology and actions by means of the constancy of insistent interpellation rather than through a series of singular acts of consecration.<sup>58</sup>

Gillian Beer sees Percival as representing the 'old narrative order':

He is the male principle, idolised – and dead. He is given no discourse of his own. [...] His story is simple: he is the young hero who goes out to the furthest reaches of his country's empire, though he finds not a grail but a grave. His fall is the stable ground on which the novel and the intermittent community of the six is built, the gravity that draws all together. [...] His death is the condition of the freedom to explore other kinds of 'I', permeable and transitive (66).

In Beer's reading, Percival's death releases the others, the 'inheritors', to explore 'other kinds of 'I' – i.e. identities not made in relation to his image. While this can only apply to the women in a strictly limited sense (their emancipation does not seem to be contemplated in the novel); for the men, who are all writers, it is arguably the case that

<sup>57</sup> Marcus, J. 'Britannia Rules *The Waves*' in Lawrence, K., 1992.

<sup>58</sup> Judith Butler (1999), in a critique of Bourdieu's adaptation of Austin's notion of 'speech acts', argues the need for a more dynamic and nuanced model which would take account of 'the way in which social positions are themselves constructed through a more tacit operation of performativity.' She notes that Bourdieu's *habitus* 'might well be read as a reformulation of 'the Althusserian formulation of 'subjection' to ideology as the mastery of a certain practice in showing how submission to an order is, paradoxically, the effect of becoming savvy in its ways' (122). Thus she suggests that 'Authorization more generally is a matter of being addressed or interpellated by prevailing forms of social power'. 'Performativity's Social Magic' (118).

they compete as writers to take over from his narrative. Percival has few ordinarily human qualities; he is only ever observed by others and, unlike his six soliloquizing companions, he never speaks to reveal his thoughts. Briggs finds that Woolf's divisions of the characters along gender lines is 'surprisingly conventional';<sup>59</sup> there appears to be little scope in this novel's depiction of women's lives for suggesting that the three female characters' desires include a yearning for political or sexual emancipation, or for the financial independence that Woolf argues in *A Room Of One's Own* and *Three Guineas* is of more liberatory significance than the vote. While Susan's 'choice' appears to be freely made in horrified reaction against the painful regimentation of school life, it is to fulfil the most traditional of female roles: motherhood as a farmer's wife. Jinny's bold but frenetic performance of the game of feminine allure is also deeply embedded in gendered convention. It is Rhoda's linked refusal and incapacity to fulfil a conventional female role (comparable to Rachel's detached, alienated status in *The Voyage Out*) which most nearly amounts to a socially alienated position, out of which a demand for female emancipation might be born.

#### **8) Woolf's scheme of gender relations in *The Waves***

Woolf's design of gender oppositions in *The Waves* is schematic: male and female bourgeois roles are played out against a shifting historical backdrop (suggested by the sun's progress across the sky), and they are roles both of choice and of social entrapment. Male choice predominates (though within a strict coding initially imposed at school); while the performance of female roles reflects obedient submission to insistent socially orchestrated interpellation or (in Bourdieu's system) through insistent 'calls to order' and inculcation into compliant dispositions. In the symbolic scheme of the novel, Percival is the seventh petal of the flower which unites in friendship the six characters who grow up together and come together twice in adulthood to celebrate Percival's departure to India, and to mourn his death. As against the set of conventionalised female roles

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<sup>59</sup> Briggs 2006, 261.

(Susan, the all-giving mother; Jinny, narcissistic socialite and amatory adventurer; Rhoda, potential poet, a damaged and crucifyingly self-conscious on-looker, and, for a time, the lover of Louis) – the men occupy different social worlds as professionals, and all three of them are writers: potential poets or novelists. Neville, a scholar of Latin poetry, retreats into the homosocial fastness of an Oxbridge college; Bernard, who marries and has a son, is a cosmopolitan and ebullient writer who feels at home in a fast-moving, urban, literary and journalistic world; Louis, an ambitious businessman as well as being a poet of some distinction, who for all his enjoyment of the trappings of power, prefers solitary writing in an attic room overlooking chimney pots and scenes of urban decay. Against this busy, modern, early twentieth century environment of middle class endeavour stands the anachronistic figure of Percival, a fallen monument to a disappearing imperial order, who appears set to stride the world before the bathos of his demise. He perhaps both represents a waning ideal of hegemonic and imperial masculinity (simultaneously noble and gentlemanly, amateur yet highly accomplished, remote and unfeeling) and an 'impossible' model of masculinity which the other men desist from emulating (in so far as they resist the appeal of the 'boasting boys'). His role at school and university is as achieved exemplar of appropriate masculine performance: a satirised figure whose exaggerated stereotypical characteristics mock the ideals he represents. Yet at the same time to some extent he enters into ordinary relationships with the others: his love for Susan is unrequited; he is the object of Neville's hopeless love; his presence is anticipated by all with high expectation; and his death is deeply mourned, especially by Bernard.

While the men occupy positions of power, accruing success in the well trodden paths of the male procession, the women are located in subordinate, submissive positions. Susan is a paragon of reproductive (and agricultural) domesticity: 'I shall have children; ... a kitchen where they bring ailing lambs to warm in baskets, where the hams hang and the onions glisten. I shall be like my mother ...' (80). Jinny, defined only in terms of her attractiveness to men, joins Rhoda on the exposed testing-ground of social and sexual

approval – ‘Rhoda and I, exposed in bright dresses, with a few precious stones nestling on a cold ring round our throats, bowed, shook hands and took a sandwich from a plate with a smile’ (103). Jinny thrives in this limelight, but Rhoda fails to pass the test of the social and sexual gaze in public places – ‘The old shivers run through me, hatred and terror, as I feel myself grappled to one spot by these hooks they cast on us; these greetings, recognitions, pluckings of the finger and searchings of the eye’ (193). The contrast between them illustrates the double-edged nature of Bourdieu’s ‘invitations or threats’ which allure or repel more or less compliant participants in the *illusio* of social life, conditioning the embodiment of gendered identity. The heightened sexuality of the female socialite and the male homosexual would appear to make them extreme examples of such conditioning, as in the evident affinity between Jinny and Neville, who are both likened to sniffing dogs in their incessant, conditioned search for sexual partners. Neville, after the loss of his idol, Percival, is ‘like a hound on the scent’ of search of someone to replace him. Jinny, with magnificent daring and cynical self-awareness, devotes her life to the thrill and temporary satisfactions of the chase: ‘I hide nothing. I am prepared. ... I can imagine nothing beyond the circle cast by my body. My body goes before me, like a lantern down a dark lane, bringing one thing after another into a ring of light. I dazzle you; I make you believe that this is all’ (105).

### **9) Masculine performance: the schooling of gentlemen warriors**

For the men, the institutionalising male procession begins at school with the headmaster’s ‘tremendous and sonorous words’ of welcome. The rituals and cadences of Anglican ceremonial are repeated at the prize-giving when the boys graduate.

‘Now we have received,’ said Louis [...] ‘whatever our masters have had to give us. [...] The great Doctor [...] has bid us “quit ourselves like men”. (On his lips quotations from the Bible, from *The Times*, seem equally magnificent.) Some will do this; others that. Some will not meet again’ (45).

Masculine assertion – boasting (in the correct accent) – begins early, on the way to school by train. But the hubbub is quelled by the solemn Roman/Anglican rituals of arrival, and the decorous order of the poetry that Neville will read:

"My uncle is the best shot in England. My cousin is Master of Foxhounds." Boasting begins. And I cannot boast, for my father is a banker in Brisbane, and I speak with an Australian accent.'

'After all this hubbub,' said Neville, ... we have arrived. This is indeed a moment. ... I salute our founder. A noble Roman air hangs over these austere quadrangles [...] where I shall explore the exactitude of the Latin language, and step firmly upon the well-laid sentences, and pronounce the explicit, the sonorous hexameters ... (23).

The boyhood companions, Louis, Neville and Bernard, are shown reacting with marked difference to the conforming rites of their schooling. Louis's significant 'rite of institution' occurs during the headmaster's sermon – 'Now we march, two by two,' said Louis, 'orderly, processional, into the chapel. ... We put off our distinctions as we enter. ... Dr Crane mounts the pulpit ... I rejoice; my heart expands in his bulk, in his authority' (26). What is for Louis a sort of mystic interpellation, for Neville, only induces alienation – 'The brute menaces my liberty [...] when he prays. [...] I gibe and mock at this sad religion'. Louis, for his part, 'intensely' resents the power of Percival; yet acknowledges 'the tremendous power of some inner compulsion' which unites the boys around him in their rivalries of emulation. Lacking athletic prowess (or in Bernard's case, punctuality), Louis, Neville and Bernard appear ill-equipped to perform the style of masculinity upheld by the school and by Percival. They do not join the 'boasting boys' driving off to play cricket, singing in unison, 'always forming into fours and marching in troops with badges on their caps', saluting 'simultaneously passing the figure of their general' – yet (unwittingly in thrall to nascent fascism) they envy them, wish they could join them – 'How majestic is their order, how beautiful is their obedience! If I could follow, if I could be with them, I would sacrifice all I know' [said Louis] (36).

The male procession continues at Cambridge – boats 'filled with indolent, with unconscious, with powerful young men' pass on the Cam before Neville's appraising eyes. He thinks he spies Percival, 'lounging on cushions, monolithic, in giant repose. No, it is

only one of his satellites, imitating his monolithic, his giant repose. He alone is unconscious of their tricks, and when he catches them at it he buffets them good-humouredly with a blow of his paw' (66). In later professional life, masculine behaviour continues to be conditioned by a need for recognition, achieved through acts of egotistical assertion. 'I have signed my name,' said Louis, 'already twenty times. I, and again I, and again I. Clear, firm unequivocal, there it stands my name. Clear-cut and unequivocal am I too' (138). Tyresius-like, Louis, the poet, has lived for thousands of years – 'a vast inheritance of experience is packed in me' – experience which animates his will to mastery in commerce, poetry, and perhaps also politics.<sup>60</sup> 'My shoulder is to the wheel; I roll the dark before me, spreading commerce where there was chaos in the far parts of the world. [...] I expunge certain stains, and erase old defilements; [...] my accent; beatings and other tortures; the boasting boys; my father, a banker at Brisbane' (138-9) His single-minded mastery as poet is hard-won and spare – 'I shall assemble a few words and forge round us a hammered ring of beaten steel' (140). Yet his large ambitions are compensation for indignities and humiliations suffered as a schoolboy; his failure to inhabit its ethos and meet the criteria set for masculine performance haunt his adult life as well. Bernard, in summing up Louis's performance in life, remembers how cutting, apt and severe he was at school; how others sought his approval, 'seldom given'; how '[h]is ascendancy was resented, as Percival's was adored'; and how he 'remained aloof; enigmatic; a scholar capable of [...] inspired accuracy' (204). This description points to the fierce competition between young males, the equally fierce desire for approval,<sup>61</sup> and the manner in which in institutionalised settings the need for acceptance creates models for emulation: the prime example of which is Percival's monumental version of an impossible masculinity, haunting and shaping the lives of Bernard's generation of 'inheritors'.

In later life both Louis and Bernard acknowledge the attraction of Percival's 'call to order', and the appeal of 'the boasting boys' -- whose conforming, militaristic manoeuvres and

<sup>60</sup> 'Louis's aim is nothing short of mastery' Gordon, 280.

<sup>61</sup> Men's 'dependency upon the judgement of the male group', Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, 52.



noisy boasts echo through the soliloquies and the texture of the novel. In Bernard's final soliloquy at the end of the novel, he returns to this theme: the schooling of a generation of boys for sport and war:

'And the long skirts of the masters' wives would come swishing by, mountainous, menacing; and our hands would fly to our caps. [...] We grew; we changed. ... We are not always aware by any means ... With one scoop a whole brakeful of boys is swept up and goes cricketing, footballing. An army marches across Europe' (205).

Bernard, the 'phrase-maker', in the last section of the novel, takes over from the other five soliloquizing characters the role of the novel's principal narrator. Bernard and Louis could be said to compete as inheritors of the old narrative order, although the promise of a new paradigm is limited. Louis's 'ring of beaten steel' and Bernard's ride against death suggest ways the inheritors may adopt new strategies -- but this hardly amounts to a new narrative order. Bernard appears to be selected by events (the coincidence of the birth of his son with the death of Percival) and by virtue of his writerly, androgynous talents, as the inheritor of Percival's role in providing -- in his case as a story teller -- a bridge of continuity, if not of meaning or coherence, for the succeeding generation.

## **10) Conclusion**

The exploration in this chapter of Woolf's methods for constructing masculinity has used different conceptions of *Bildung* (Gadamer's philosophical account of the tradition and Bourdieu's post-Structuralist adaptation) to comment on Woolf's subversion of features of the *Bildungsroman* in *Jacob's Room* and *The Waves*. The two novels represent through the early death of their hero/protagonists the symbolic demise in the post-imperial moment between the First and Second World Wars of a Victorian/Edwardian version of hegemonic English gentlemanly masculinity. Each is elegiacally memorialised (Jacob lost in Flanders; Percival as fallen imperial monument in India), marking stages in Woolf's oeuvre of a historicised representation of masculinity in formation and simultaneously in crisis. In the earlier novel, the deployment of a variety of female perspectives upon Jacob's agonistic masculinity, creates a multiple, cumulative (feminist leaning) critique of each

stage of his formation: his self-construction in sentient manliness. The critique is made not without considerable sympathy for his plight: a certain bemused concern at the heavy weather he makes of it, and admiration for the instinctive prowess which often rescues him. The onus upon Jacob to 'rise up' to an anachronistic ideal of manhood at times appears unduly burdensome, even irrelevant to his main concerns and predilections – a hint of role distance which questions and undercuts the processes of *Bildung* at each stage, further destabilising the novel's form and content. The gently mocking tone of the female narrative voice is, however, tempered by the overarching sombre melancholy of the elegiac mood of the whole novel which marks indirectly, but no less seriously, the significance in the fact that Jacob does not return from the war. Percival by contrast is elevated by satirical monumentalising and rhetorical distancing to a virtually non-sentient, inhuman plane of heroic service as patriotic icon of hegemonic masculinity: the standard against which ordinary human identity and performance is acquired and measured according, in this reading, to Bourdieu's scheme of gendered *habitus*. The next chapter will return to Woolf's first novel, to explore how themes of travel, exploration and education in her earliest writing anticipate her later analysis and representations of gender and power.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **Knowledge as Travel**

#### **1) Introduction**

This chapter returns chronologically to Woolf's first novel, *The Voyage Out* (1915), to trace the origins of the autoethnographical method which she developed for fictionally constructing a social world. The novel's tropes of travel and displacement locate the domestic politics of gender and power in an international, geopolitical and historical context. Esty suggests a range of allegorical connotations linking Rachel's quest to these contexts: a 'skittish permutation of figures for Rachel: lost colony, virgin land; also ship, river, butterfly, piano string, breeze'.<sup>1</sup> Woolf's allusive use of tropes of travel writing creates historical and spatial vantage points in the novel which are exploited to highlight the gendered contradictions of Rachel Vinrace's prospects and fate. Her questing voyage takes place at a typically disputatious moment in the history of women's emancipation when advances made in the cause of women's rights were countered by a late nineteenth century resurgence of jingoistic, imperialistic masculine conservatism.<sup>2</sup> Woolf exploited the effects of distance produced by travel, and both played and broke with narrative conventions in this novel. As Gordon comments, this first novel is both experimental and conventional: "My boldness terrifies me", Virginia told Clive [Bell] at the outset of this experiment. But she veered between daring and the decorum of traditional fiction'.<sup>3</sup> The narrative strategies with which she experimented to bring the gendered social order into view – in particular the anthropological device of isolating a sample of humanity (a group of English upper-middle class intellectuals) in a ship at sea on a voyage of exploration and against an alienating Darwinian landscape in a fashionable new South American coastal tourist resort – look forward to Woolf's later technique of locating outsider narrative observers within her texts. Also the political themes of gender and exclusion broached in

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<sup>1</sup> Esty 2007, 80.

<sup>2</sup> Tosh 1994, 196.

<sup>3</sup> Gordon 2006, 117.

this novel are taken up in later work as Woolf's social critique is developed, and as her command of form becomes progressively more assured and strategic.

Following the sea change of her voyage out to South America, the exotic setting at the Santa Marina tourist resort provides for Rachel's coming out into Society a defamiliarising background against which the processes of her *Bildung* and socialisation are examined (and found to be wanting). The tropical setting locates Rachel's individual, gendered fate both within a historical frame of seafaring colonial adventure and scientific discovery, and at a specific turn-of-century late imperial moment of already waning British global power. The main action of the novel – the social and intellectual 'rounding out' of the barely educated Rachel at the hands of various mentors and tutors (both male and female) – is also set within the context of the new phenomenon of mass tourism which, emerging at the turn of the twentieth century and led by a privileged elite in search of new and enlarging perspectives, still retained certain features of the aristocratic eighteenth century Grand Tour (the culmination and testing ground of a young gentleman's cultural formation). The irony of Rachel's particular inaptitude for intensive formative socialisation (notwithstanding the gendered confusion of the *Bildung* envisaged for her) produces a comic satire on social and gender roles. Her belated education is placed in the hands of three Bloomsbury-ite mentor/tutors: Helen Ambrose, her aunt (assuming the role of mother to her deceased sister's child); and two young Oxbridge men, St John Hirst and Terence Hewet: the former overseeing her intellectual development; the latter engaging her emotionally and tutoring her in a masculine version of Bloomsbury sexual mores.

Rachel's refusal – or rather her untutored incapacity for learned compliance – to submit to social expectation and adopt approved gendered behaviour starkly highlights the social conspiracy which would make her conventionally feminine. Her incapacity also produces a satire of male (and female) attempts to induct Rachel into a world of knowledge defined by masculine learning. The parameters and assumptions of that learning is most specifically mocked in the reading which is recommended to her (mostly by men) and in

the portrait of Hirst, whose near hermetic enclosure in homosocial intellectualism and distaste for the niceties of gendered social exchange, means that he appears least qualified of all to understand her situation.<sup>4</sup> However, the *ad hoc* procedures for bringing out Rachel do not bring about her social adaptation – instead, untimely death conspires to unmake her half-hearted commitment to marry Hewet and to pre-empt her return voyage. Her unachieved *Bildung*, whose implications are hinted at but never fully explained, hangs over the final sombre stages of the novel's action, as a well-intentioned and possibly misconceived pedagogical effort, symbolically but ineffectually reminding a complacent, backward-looking society of its failings.

## **2) The Voyage Out (1915): Rachel's voyage of discovery and escape**

Woolf's first novel was composed, re-written and re-conceptualised over a considerable period of time, some commentators dating its inception to 1904 (the year of her father's death), and its writing to 1908.<sup>5</sup> As drafts were revised, the admixture of autobiographical material was progressively reduced. It was a period in which illness and death of family members coincided not only with episodes of the author's own mental illness, but also with her own courtship and marriage. DeSalvo notes the coincidence of Woolf's breakdowns with her re-writing of the episodes of Rachel's illness and death.<sup>6</sup> Thus critics' and biographers' suggestions that Woolf is essentially an autobiographical writer (Wheare 1992), and that her first novel is 'openly connected' to her own childhood (Lee 1996, 127), seem to be borne out by the appearance in fictional form of biographical details: Rachel's family connections, her friendship with and courtship by intellectuals of Cambridge and Bloomsbury type, and the context of improving travel and tourism. In addition Rachel's episodes of illness might well be said to reflect the author's own periods of mental instability. The novel contains a recognisable fictional version of Virginia Stephen's own sea voyage to Spain and Portugal in 1905, undertaken a year before the

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<sup>4</sup> Hirst's ignorance of women is comically and cruelly total: 'Does she reason, does she feel, or is she merely a kind of footstool?' (190).

<sup>5</sup> Hussey 1995, 332.

<sup>6</sup> De Salvo 1980, 4, 11.

fateful family trip to Greece, where Thoby, her elder brother, contracted typhoid fever from which he died after returning to London. The death in the novel from mysteriously contracted illness (accompanied by nightmares and hallucination) of Rachel, soon after her marriage engagement while on a holiday trip, biographically and thematically connects the arbitrariness of illness and death with the act of travel itself (here by a questing young woman), and with the novel's linked themes of female *Bildung* and exploration of a 'new world' of marriageability and social expectation.

'... [O]ur own foam spread like white lace on the dark waters -- a very lovely thing is a ship at sea', writes Virginia Stephen in her journal as she sets out for Portugal in March 1905. The ship, already figured as bridal vessel, is translated into another allegorical vehicle in the novel's account of Rachel's self discovery, promising escape from a girlhood of domestic suffocation and a role within a bracing new adult world. However, the novel charts her increasing informed awareness of the social constraints which still fatally bind her. The optimism of the author's journal entry is echoed in *The Voyage Out* as Rachel and Clarissa Dalloway stand on deck like questing figureheads. 'How good life is!' At that moment, standing out in the fresh breeze, with the sun upon the waves, and Mrs. Dalloway's hand upon her arm, it seemed indeed as if life which had been unnamed before was infinitely wonderful, and too good to be true' (52). But the promise of the moment is duly belied by events. The late imperial reflux of the Dalloways' jingoistic bravura is satirically deflated and summarily dismissed with a departure as sudden as their arrival on board the ship; and Clarissa's potential modelling role in bringing Rachel out as 'a Tory hostess' (to perform a wifely social role for her widowed father) is as quickly terminated. Starting out as an extremely unaware, partially educated, un-emancipated and child-like young woman, Rachel is as disoriented as enlightened by the guidance she receives. Although she shows some promise of becoming the 'reasonable person' that her aunt had hoped she could be, the fact that through her mysterious illness and death Rachel fails to assume a position in society and indeed does not return from her journey, points to the historical anomaly of her claim to independence as a woman, and to the lack

(apart from marriage) of any preordained position in society which is appropriate to her talents.

The transposition by means of a sea voyage of the site for Rachel's social initiation, from her starting point in the stultifying seclusion of respectable Richmond to the social microcosm of the classy South American tourist resort, isolates and highlights the social pedagogy of the action,<sup>7</sup> while also placing it in a historical context of colonial conquest and imperial competition.<sup>8</sup> The haphazard nature of historical records (as if based on unreliable travellers' tales of adventure), is evoked in the narrator's account of Santa Marina's history as a colonial possession fought over by the Spanish, Portuguese and English. Audible only to the reader, this obscure history is half erased even as it is told as hearsay.<sup>9</sup> The sketching in of its more recent history as elite tourist destination is suggestive of a modern (and differently gendered) version of a Grand Tour destination. The small numbers who travel there, 'only a handful of well-to-do people', do so out of a feeling of 'a kind of dissatisfaction [...] with the older countries and the enormous accumulations of carved stone, stained glass, and rich brown painting which they offered the tourist' (80). They are also in search of something new. In place of the instructive attractions and antiquities which Europe since the eighteenth-century Grand Tour had established as the prerequisites of the fully rounded education of a gentleman is a new world whose vast proportions have already stretched the imagination of the few intrepid foreigners who have seen it: 'The country itself taxed all their powers of description, for they said it was much bigger than Italy, and really nobler than Greece' (81). These evocations of Elizabethan adventure and the peculiarly Woolfian development of a

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<sup>7</sup> 'Social pedagogy' refers to forms of education which seek to overcome institutional barriers and exclusionary practices, e.g. by acknowledging the value of informal and experiential learning and promoting wider participation (cf *International Journal of Social Pedagogy*, Institute of Education, UCL). Rachel's belated, 'compensatory' education at the hands of her Bloomsbury-ite tutors (pedagogues) can perhaps be seen as a form of 'experiential learning'.

<sup>8</sup> The new world destination also appears as continental Europe transposed on a distant environment, unencumbered not only by the oldness of Europe but also the more abrasive cultural alienations of Asian or African colonies, though these are more familiar to the English imperial traveller (Thanks to Suman Gupta for this point).

<sup>9</sup> Lawrence 1994, 158.

gendered reversal of the social ritual of the Grand Tour,<sup>10</sup> presage Rachel's arrival and emphasise the momentous nature of the steps she must take to find a place in society: the question as to whether the position will be a 'preordained' one structures the novel's plot.

Woolf's choice of setting also chronologically links Rachel's voyage of discovery to a historical period in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century which was characterised by 'severe international competition and territorial annexations [...] accompanied by considerable anxiety about Britain's military and naval capabilities'<sup>11</sup> (Richard Dalloway's mission shows her awareness of this). Virginia Stephen had herself boarded a British warship when she took part in the 'Dreadnought Hoax' in 1910,<sup>12</sup> during the period of composition of *The Voyage Out*, and her lampooning of Dalloway's military/naval/strategic mission shares in the subversive spirit of that event. Dalloway provides a logically parodic link between the early buccaneering days of English imperialism and its latter days of fading glory – glories which could only be perpetuated by men of Dalloway's 'calibre', who could be relied on to keep the map of the world red and British: 'had there been men like Richard Dalloway in the time of Charles the first, the map would undoubtedly be red where it is now an odious green' (80). However, in modern times, Dalloway's performance of a heroically imperial masculinity at a moment prior to the First World War when British imperial economic power was stretched to a historical limit from where it could only diminish, is destabilised both by his implausibly exaggerated jingoism and the irony of the historical belatedness of his mission.<sup>13</sup> His passing flirtation with Rachel is figured as the passing of ships – Rachel as the *Euphrosyne*, 'an emblem of the loneliness of human life' (p. 78), and Richard as predatory warship (60). Doubly subjected as she is as female and British subject, this intersection of trajectories locates

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<sup>10</sup> The rounding out of the education of young men of the ruling classes through exposure to 'the treasured artefacts and ennobling society of the Continent' in preparation for 'leadership positions preordained for them at home': Buzard 2002, 38.

<sup>11</sup> Bridges 2002, 54.

<sup>12</sup> Bell 1972, 157.

<sup>13</sup> Hobsbawm (1969) calculates Britain's global economic power, in the face of rivalry from Germany and the US, as waning from the 1880s: 'Britain [...] was becoming a parasitic rather than a competitive world economy, living off the remains of world monopoly, the underdeveloped world, her past accumulation of wealth and the advance of her rivals' (192).



Rachel's voyage in imperial history; the dark zone of nightmares which is opened up by Richard's casual act of seduction is its underside.

### **3) Autoethnography: the 'seeing woman'**

An early reviewer of *The Voyage Out* wondered why, given the unmistakable Englishness and upper middle class manners of the characters depicted, the novel was not set in a hotel on the English south coast rather than in an exotic South American locale (W. H. Hudson, 1915). Another reviewer made the insightful suggestion that the purpose of the setting for the novel, and of other developing techniques of this emerging young author, is to make the familiar strange, the better to anatomise it -- thus Rachel 'has the faculty, which does not belong only to youth, of finding strangeness even in the world of familiar things' (A.N.M. review, 1915).<sup>14</sup> Such reviews draw attention to the presence, even in her first novel, of techniques and a method for strategically distancing herself in order to de-familiarise the social world of which Woolf herself was a part. These early critical judgements are significant because they were made prior to the establishment of her reputation and thus belong to a period in the work's reception which is unclouded by subsequent controversies about Woolf's politics and literary principles. They indicate that from her earliest fiction critical readers noted a mode of critique in her writing, which, according to the later evidence, she then expanded alongside the development of her political analysis and her range of techniques as a writer. As suggested above, Woolf's use of tropes borrowed from travel writing produce shifts of perspective which bring a social world into focus; Lorna Sage describes the effects achieved in her first novel as follows:

The novel of beginning on the world is a rite of passage, an odyssey of sorts. It is where you 'find your bearings' as a writer. Woolf's Portuguese excursion was her only real sea voyage, but the metaphor of taking ship and watching the solid land drift away was the compelling thing. She wanted to shrink England and get English life into a new perspective. The novel is full of passages that glory in the queasy shifts of viewpoint you can engineer by first going to sea.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Majumdar and McLauren 1975, 61, 57.

<sup>15</sup> Sage 1992, xii.

The voyage of the *Euphrosyne* creates an appraising distance between 'the shrinking island' of Britain and her New World destination, and those who travel there find themselves under frank scrutiny. Travel has the effect of producing what Buzard has called 'the strategically alienated perspective which brings a culture into view' (2005). This perspective suggests an autoethnographic/anthropological reading of the novel, whereby Woolf treats the shipload of Rachel's relatives and acquaintances who become residents at the Villa St Gervais, and the hotel full of English tourists who come for the season at Santa Marina, as objects of anthropological study. Both the major and the minor characters in the novel are evidently drawn from the social world of Woolf's own childhood and adolescence, but transported and framed by the voyage as strange creatures in a Darwinian world full of marvels in need of discovery and investigation.<sup>16</sup> The major characters are more or less rounded and developed, some of them as virtual portraits of contemporaries (e.g. Clive Bell as Hewet, Lytton Strachey as Hirst); while the minor characters in the hotel are mainly stock figures -- Hirst designates them as 'types'. Isolated in ship, hotel and villa against an alien landscape, the characters are drawn almost without exception from the ranks of the English upper and upper-middle educated classes. Cut adrift from their familiar contexts the more sharply to put them into focus, they tend to act themselves more typically, sometimes exaggeratedly so.

In depicting character Woolf combines sharply-observed realism with a certain satirical exaggeration (satirical exaggeration is most marked in the depiction of the Dalloways). The device of accentuating Rachel's unformed latency, the child-like nature of her young adulthood (as commentators have noted, Woolf progressively made her more ingenuous in successive drafts),<sup>17</sup> has the effect of making her into a kind of screen against which the conventional and/or particular nature and features of other characters are brought into sharper focus. The sharpening and magnifying effect of this device foregrounds salient features of male characters in particular. Masculine assertion takes many forms in the

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<sup>16</sup> Dislocation of Europe from Europe without other cultural interference seems to throw up features of virgin territory – which is itself arguably an imperialist imaginary construction of South America. (Thanks to Suman Gupta for this further point.)

<sup>17</sup> Wheare 1989, Sage 2002.

scenes of social life represented on board ship, in the tourist hotel and in the villa where Rachel and her aunt and uncle reside, but it is noticeable that Rachel's *Bildung* provides occasion, challenge or temptation for men to contribute to her intellectual and sentimental formation. In this way her father's removed but menacing, bullying presence (which has created Rachel's cowed state) is accentuated; Dalloway's man-of-the-world glamour is magnified by Rachel's tentatively enquiring innocence; and the satirical effects of the absurd intellectuality and contradictory masculinities of the young men are likewise enhanced by the *tabula rasa*<sup>18</sup> of her largely uneducated condition.

Characters in this displaced social microcosm fall under Woolf's autoethnographic gaze, and under each others' scrutiny, as the social order which has created the anomaly of Rachel's lack of 'learned ignorance' is interrogated.<sup>19</sup> As the narrative unfolds, Rachel's fate is played out within two enclosed micro-contexts: the ship (owned and captained by her father) with its small company of upper middle class English tourists and travellers; and the equally socially homogenous community of well-to-do tourists at the recently established tourist resort.<sup>20</sup> The minutiae of social interaction are played out in these encapsulated social milieux, bringing out ways in which space is socially differentiated and revealing the embedded rituals and conventions governing the world in which Rachel is to find her place.

Space in the novel is demarcated by gender and class. While the ship's crew is invisible, and in the hotel (serviced by indigenous staff) some differentiation by ethnicity is evident,<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Sage 1992, xx.

<sup>19</sup> In examining the nature of discourse and understanding that exists between the anthropologist as 'outside observer' and the 'native' informant, Bourdieu's specifies that 'to be "native" ... is to be in that relation of "learned ignorance", of immediate but unselfconscious understanding which defines the practical relation to the world'. *The Logic of Practice* (18). Patently Rachel does not relate in such an immediate or unselfconscious way to a world from which she is, by displacement, doubly alienated.

<sup>20</sup> James Clifford identifies a synecdoche or 'chronotope' of culture (such as Woolf's use of the ship and the hotel) as a technique of representation used in late twentieth century ethnography whereby the part stands for the whole: it is '(a setting or scene organizing time and space in representable form) [which] comes to resemble as much a site of travel encounters as of residence; it is less like a tent in a village, or a controlled laboratory or a site of initiation and inhabitation, and more like a hotel lobby, urban cafe, ship, or bus' (25).

<sup>21</sup> Members of the crew of the ship are glimpsed or heard only momentarily, in the background, in the same way as the 'wrong side of hotel life' (a woman beheading a chicken) is glimpsed by

the whole novel focuses keenly upon fine distinctions of social class (and breeding) and upon styles of gendered behaviour among the (mainly) upper middle class English tourists. The gendered separation of spheres is brought into critical focus both by the instruction which Rachel receives in the workings of Society and by the ways in which constricted shipboard space and rooms in the hotel and villa are allocated. In addition, some play is made with Hirst's snobbish but critical categorisation of the hotel inmates as 'types' whose allocated social space is bounded by invisible 'chalk marks'.<sup>22</sup>

As Hewet instructs Rachel in how to deal with Hirst -- i.e. to 'make allowances' and laugh at his enclosed world -- the strong brand of Cambridge male homosociality is brought into view. Hirst's ideal place is in Cambridge 'in front of a looking glass, so to speak, in a beautiful panelled room' -- 'a cosy, smoky, masculine place, where he can stretch his legs out, and only speak when he's got something to say' (143).<sup>23</sup> A version of this masculine space is created on the first evening on board the *Euphrosyne* after Helen and Rachel have left the gentlemen to their after-dinner ritual of talk and cigars.<sup>24</sup> The scene brings together two old Cambridge men (Ridley Ambrose and William Pepper) who automatically fall into reminiscence, assessment of colleagues' and rivals' progress in the 'procession', and timeless reconstruction of that 'cosy, smokey, masculine place'. Pepper is a comically exaggerated exponent of assiduous learning ready to intervene whenever veracity of any kind might be in question. Compared by Rachel (who knows him as a family friend) to a fossilised fish, he comes alive as 'a vivacious and malicious old ape'

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accident by Rachel as she looks through a window of the hotel. Thus the artifice that these 'chronotopes' are representative of a single class fraction is preserved.

<sup>22</sup> This is an early instance of Woolf's use (especially in later work such as *The Waves* and *Three Guineas*) of invisible 'chalk marks' to refer to arcane distinctions of gender and social class marking off elite masculine privilege.

<sup>23</sup> Hirst's inclusion amongst 'the cleverest people in England' links him to the Cambridge Apostles in whose circles moved both Woolf's father and her brother Thoby. Thoby helped to initiate Bloomsbury's intellectual grouping by inviting his Cambridge friends to gatherings attended by both the Stephen sisters, Vanessa and Virginia. In attending they in turn helped to breach the boundaries of the exclusively male intellectual homosociality which Woolf satirises here.

<sup>24</sup> The ship's name is an in-joke, being the name of a privately printed (1905) volume of poetry containing work by Clive Bell, Lytton Strachey, Walter Lamb, Saxon Sydney-Turner, Thoby Stephen, Leonard Woolf and others. 'Woolf wrote a scathing review (unpublished) of the volume in which she commented on 'the advantage' of the custom 'which allows the daughter to educate herself at home, while the son is educated by others abroad'. Hussey 1995, 84.

when left alone with Ridley. After withdrawing, the 'ladies' (Helen and Rachel) take a turn on deck in the darkness from where they catch a glimpse of the masculine ritual.

They looked through a chink in the blind and saw that long cigars were being smoked in the dining-room; they saw Mr Ambrose throw himself violently against the back of his chair, while Mr Pepper crinkled his cheeks as though they had been cut in wood. The ghost of a roar of laughter came out to them, and was drowned at once in the wind (11).

Their talk is of achievements of contemporaries at Cambridge, mainly measured in terms of books and articles,<sup>25</sup> though occasionally domestic female subservience appears relevant: 'There's an unmarried daughter who keeps house for him, [...] but it's never the same, not at his age' (9). Male seclusion is preserved by women's exclusion and ministrations – on the ship Helen magically creates for her scholarly husband the most perfect quarters he has ever had for secluded study; and in the villa he likewise achieves a book-lined study. At the other pole of gendered separation, the Dalloways' cabin is transformed by Clarissa's feminine accoutrements into a glamourised private space, serving as essential backroom to Clarissa's performance of femininity – and as the idealised, feminised private zone which makes possible Richard's public performance of masculinity. 'Already this cramped little cabin was the dressing room of a lady of quality. There were bottles containing liquids; there were trays, boxes, brushes, pins. Evidently not an inch of her person lacked its proper instrument. The scent which had intoxicated Rachel pervaded the air' (40). Meanwhile Chailey, the servant, is allocated inferior and cramped quarters too close to the ship's boilers for comfort or peace.

Throughout *The Voyage Out* scenes of social ritual are enacted as if on a stage set. Triangulated from strategic observational vantage points, bearings are taken on the gender order which determines Rachel's fate. Situations where one or more characters observe others, through a window into a lighted room at night, through half opened curtains or a doorway, establish a distanced, framed perspective whereby social

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<sup>25</sup> Woolf's father, Leslie Stephen, performed a significant role in defining and recording masculine achievement as first editor of *The Dictionary of National Biography*. Stephen and his successor editor, Sidney Lee, selected names to be included; using criteria such as 'noteworthy' and 'an "Aristotelian" definition of potential eminence', they argued that 'no man's life should be admitted [...] that did not present at least one action that was 'serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude'. Broughton 1999, 33.

exchanges are viewed as if from afar. Author, reader, and characters themselves are all implicated/constructed by this technique into a complicit and critically appraising act of authorial observation (and ethnographical recording). The tension created in this dynamic (of sociological description and imaginative fiction) is pushed to a limit in one such scene. Rachel and Helen, outside the hotel at night, take a perspective on the human creatures brought in by steamships for the tourist season, framed in turn in the lighted windows as the women pass from window to window.<sup>26</sup> At one window Helen barely escapes discovery when she gasps in surprise at recognising an acquaintance; at another, while Rachel casts an appraising eye over Hewet (her future fiancé), the observers are unaware that they are themselves being observed by Hirst standing unseen inside.<sup>27</sup> Other scenes of observation include Rachel's frank appraisal of the sleeping form of Richard Dalloway on deck at her side (a parallel of Helen's observation and reflection upon Rachel herself asleep – as Richard's waiting victim). In his turn, the lovelorn Hewet makes a nocturnal visit to the villa to observe the activities of Rachel and her aunt and uncle; while Hirst amuses himself by taking a sociological perspective on the class distinctions and sub-groupings of the hotel guests, marking them off with 'chalk marks'. The hotel and the villa, strategically distanced but within sight of each other across the sweep of the bay, situate the interactions of the plot within and between this series of spatial and social distinctions. These mutually observing scenarios have something almost farcical about them as well, due in part to the concentration of energies and occasional unexpected humour of the observations.<sup>28</sup>

Shipboard life receives similar treatment. With the sudden arrival of the Dalloways on board the *Euphrosyne*, new and disrupting angles of perspective are opened up on the

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<sup>26</sup> Helen's and Rachel's vantage point is a reversal of the commanding gaze and normative perspective of 'the seeing man' (Pratt 1992, *Imperial Eyes*).

<sup>27</sup> Woolf plays here with techniques and framing devices which are similar to those which sociologists later in the twentieth century (e.g. Goffman, Bourdieu) used as metaphors in their analysis of activity and roles in social systems.

<sup>28</sup> An aspect of this effect is that it gives the author added distance from autobiographically derived material (Woolf as insider observing her own world). Bourdieu (1990) comments on the anthropologist as outsider: 'Distance is not abolished by bringing the outsider fictitiously closer to the imaginary native, as is generally attempted; it is only by distancing, through objectification, the native who is in every outside observer that the native is brought closer to the outsider' (20).

ship and its human complement. The Dalloways' upper class credentials and party political connections bring distinctions of class, breeding and political affiliation into scrutiny. Richard Dalloway's off-duty mission of reviewing British military and naval preparedness off the west coast of Africa adds an imperial dimension to the purposes of the voyage, while Clarissa's aristocratic values give a sharply appraising edge to her account of the latest strange situation that her travels have thrown her into, as her letter on their first evening aboard reveals.

Picture us, my dear, afloat in the very oddest ship you can imagine. It's not the ship so much as the people. One does come across queer sorts as one travels. I must say I find it hugely amusing. [...] They're like people playing croquet in the 'sixties. How long they've all been shut up in this ship I don't know -- years and years I should say -- but one feels as though one had boarded a little separate world, and they'd never been on shore, or done ordinary things in their lives (41).

Clarissa's brief epistolary assumption of a narrator/observer position in the text locates her privileged vantage point:<sup>29</sup> the ship imagined as a kind of time capsule; those aboard (unreliable artistic types), out of time and out of place, playing a game according to rules which pertain to a different era. Clarissa's strategic narrative role, with its acute focus on the niceties of English class distinctions, reminds the reader of Woolf's ethnographic purposes -- 'Being on this ship makes it so much more vivid -- what it really means to be English' (43) -- as Clarissa confides to her husband before they go to bed.

The topography both of the ship and of Santa Marina thus afford a multiplicity of 'strategically alienated perspectives', lending themselves to social observation and ethnographic investigation by observing men and women alike -- although undoubtedly it is what women see of men (or do not see, given Clarissa's blindness regarding her husband's qualities) that is most significant for Woolf's purposes. Clarissa's role is exemplary. While fulfilling her role as wife, travelling companion and ideal female political partner (the achieved exponent of the role of Tory hostess) to absurd perfection, she also wishes to spruce up the nondescript types she finds on board, and shake out their inadequacies. Using in her letter a language of breeding and conditioning (her encounter

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<sup>29</sup> In her letter Clarissa adopts something of the detached style of the 'indomitable' nineteenth century female travel writer (cf Mills 1991, 4).

with the 'indescribably insignificant' Pepper is 'like sitting down to dinner with an ill conditioned fox-terrier'), she immediately wants to take Rachel's training in hand -- to 'rake her out'. The badly educated and socially gauche Rachel is figured as a damped down fire or stove in need of riddling or raking. With nicely patterned irony, it is indeed Clarissa's husband Richard who soon after acts the rake in almost seducing Rachel. Thrown together in the aftermath of the storm and tempted by Rachel's innocence, he takes advantage of the lurching ship to kiss her -- a fateful kiss which awakens both sexual feelings and fatal nightmares.<sup>30</sup>

The depiction of Dalloway's manhood is pointedly satirical. Middle aged, slightly battered by hard-earned experience but still reasonably trim and serviceable, his bearing and costume are almost invariably impeccable. Woolf's Swifitean technique of presenting his qualities through his own account of himself and his achievements to the admiring eyes and ears of the innocent and susceptible Rachel, is a further variant in her repertoire of fictional tricks of observation. Both Richard's seductive power over his ready victim and Rachel's shattered illusions and subsequently growing horrors seem pointedly excessive. The forceful metaphors of industrial potency -- 'He seemed to come from the humming oily centre of the machine where the polished rods are sliding and the pistons thumping; he grasped things so firmly but so loosely' (38) -- seem to mock as much as emphasise the powerful effect of his masculine presence upon Rachel. Significantly, Rachel's education in the guiles of gentlemanly behaviour is cruelly swift: coldly enlightened as she is in the double standard, in the short step which separates her from the prostitutes in Piccadilly, and in the thin veneer which conceals the savage beneath the respectable surface of civilised behaviour.

The exchange of views between the urbane politician and the 'unlicked girl' is decidedly one-sided. Richard's worldview is assertively imperial and powered by visions of Britannic

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<sup>30</sup> Contrasting interpretations of the kiss: E M Forster ('He awakens her sexually') and Roger Poole (equation between 'the Dalloway/Vinrace kiss' and Leonard Woolf's kiss of betrothal as reported by Virginia) (Poole 1995, 134).



unity -- 'Unity of aim, of dominion, of progress. The dispersion of the best ideas over the greatest area' (55). He becomes a mouthpiece for a 'compelling fantasy of mastery' on a global scale. Actively hostile to women's suffrage ('no woman has what I would call the political instinct,' (58)), he relies on his wife to maintain a resourceful, separate domestic sphere where his ideals may be preserved and nurtured ('It is impossible for human beings, constituted as they are, both to fight and to have ideals', (56)). Clarissa fulfils her supporting role to perfection: the couple perform both in public (among the ship's company) and in the privacy of their bedroom a highly accomplished version of the married life which Clarissa holds up for Rachel as the ideal. Simultaneously, like a seductive Britannia, she enacts the ideal of Richard's inspiration -- conjugal intimacy and their wish for a son merge into an imperial vision of continuity and completion as Clarissa projects Richard's career as a glorious culmination of centuries of heroic imperial endeavour.

'Being on this ship makes it so much more vivid -- what it really means to be English. One thinks of all we've done, and our navies, and the people in India and Africa, and how we've gone on century after century, sending out boys from little country villages -- and of men like you, Dick, and it makes one feel as if one couldn't bear *not* to be English!' [...]

'It's the continuity,' said Richard sententiously. [...] He ran his mind along the line of conservative policy, which went steadily from Lord Salisbury to Alfred [...]. 'It's taken a long time, but we've pretty nearly done it', he said; 'it remains to consolidate' (43).

Consolidated as the couple's vision is with Richard's passionate kiss, the interwoven patriotic litany and marital ritual seem to lampoon the belated surge of jingoistic fervour which accompanied turn of the century anxieties about Britain's imperial future. Woolf's cameo of the Dalloways' performance of marriage and patriotism on the high seas recalls operetta and Carolyn Williams's reading of Gilbert and Sullivan's late nineteenth century 'depiction of the peculiar styles of being -- that is to say, of 'acting' -- English'.<sup>31</sup> The dazzling effect the couple, each in different ways, have on Rachel is shown in the startling contrast they make with her colourless home life, the seductive power of their glamour

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<sup>31</sup> Williams 1995, 221.

upon her, and also by the careful manner in which Helen, after their departure, manages to persuade her that after all they were rather 'second rate'.

#### **4) Rachel's encounters with men**

Gordon describes how the young Virginia Stephen's earliest attempts at biography of the obscure led her to develop 'a biographic theory' (that of examining 'the hidden moments and obscure formative experiences in a life, rather than its more public actions'):<sup>32</sup> an approach which influenced the composition of *The Voyage Out* and the treatment of Rachel's life. Gordon suggests that in daring to make Rachel 'featureless', an 'abstraction of what is unknown in human nature' (2006, 117), Woolf emphasises her latency: what she might become were it not for the demands and constraints which are thrust upon her. One effect of accentuating in this way Rachel's enigmatic 'innocence' is to highlight by contrast the nature of the masculinity of the men she has dealings with. Rachel's encounters with the men who already have or would make marks upon and seek to mould her unformed nature are thus staged as a sequence of more or less conflictive negotiations wherein her psychological and emotional resources and independence of mind are tested. While Rachel may be 'forced' by pressures of circumstance to conform to social expectations (for example, the conventional young engaged couple at the hotel are held up as the model which she and Terence are induced to follow), the internal drama of Rachel's questioning of and resistance to these normative pressures shows her attempting at the same time to pursue a different set of objectives concerned, for example, with realising her talents as a musician and finding her own place in the world.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Gordon 2006, 112.

<sup>33</sup> The impromptu, improvised dance music Rachel plays on the piano after the band has left at the end of the dance scene, inducing revelers to invent steps of a 'dance for people who don't know how to dance' (152), suggests that in Music Rachel finds an alternative order which others could be induced to follow. Similarly, Katherine Hilbery in *Night and Day* finds in Mathematics an alternative order to masculine ancestor worship; and she and Ralph Denham find alternative steps to the dance of courtship imposed by bourgeois patriarchy (see Chapter Three for discussion of Woolf's trope of dance).

Rachel's 'obscure formative experiences' are explored at the level of her dreams and nightmares as well as at the level of the social interactions of the plot; the shifts between these parallel levels of narrative dramatise her ambivalence. Her ambivalence may be extreme, as in her reaction to Dalloway's kiss -- an admixture of pleasure and horror; or more muted, such as her automaton-like responses to Terence's proposal of marriage in the jungle glade. In Sage's reading, the construction of Rachel as *tabula rasa* -- 'a mental virgin on which others are tempted to impress their tastes' makes of her 'a 'vessel' in several senses [whereby] people want to form her and 'bring her out"; while the import of her death is that she will not be 'a 'vessel' carrying the culture's codes and reproducing (in marriage and motherhood) its values'.<sup>34</sup> Whereas Woolf does no more than hint towards this kind of interpretation of the social import of Rachel's death, it is evident from many accounts of her first novel that the portrayal of Rachel as victim of a malign or indifferent fate, has been seen as also indicting the men who surround her and who dominate the social world which produces her fate. In representing men here and in her later fiction, Woolf drew extensively on her own experience and began to develop, as Lee (1996) puts it, what would later become by the time of *Three Guineas*, 'her own post-Victorian, post-war analysis of her childhood'.

Virginia Woolf built her political analysis of her culture on her experience of her childhood. The father's dominant needs and demands, the sacrifice of the mother and unmarried daughters to the tyranny of family, the prejudicial economy which spent money on sending boys to school and university and kept the daughters at home, where the system of lessons kept her, as she always said, 'uneducated', the censorious jurisdiction of grandmothers and aunts, the disciplinarian attitudes of the family doctors, the hypocrisy and censorship which kept the daughters ignorant of sex: these would be the items, for life, on her political agenda (128).

While Woolf would later develop throughout her writing her analysis of the 'atrocities' of fathers (as she refers to Rachel's treatment by her father) and the effects of such 'crimes' on their children, her first novel dramatises Rachel's unpreparedness (caused by the distortions of her upbringing) for the demands of life. Its focuses on unsuccessful efforts made by a section of the succeeding generation, by means of the vehicle of knowledge and cultural change represented by Bloomsbury, to rectify or compensate for these

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<sup>34</sup> VO 1992, Introduction, xx; xxvi.

distortions. Representing sections of the English educated (upper middle) class and including both an older, parental, Victorian generation and an emerging younger post-Victorian, pre-Great War generation, the male characters in *The Voyage Out* are caught by the action of the novel in a moment of historical change when the education and economic position of women was sharply put in question by the issue of female suffrage. The attitudes of these men towards Rachel define their position in this debate and in the action of the novel. Willoughby and Ridley, of the older generation and the middle-aged Dalloway, share a masculine incapacity to think or act outside established patterns of thought and behaviour -- patterns and norms which, after all, structure and uphold their very identity as privileged, superior beings. The same traditional attitudes are shared by most of the hotel residents -- mostly conventional types (with the notable exception of several single women). Inured in an enclosed world of stratified privilege from change or challenge, they provide an unchanging socially homogenous background against which the minor drama of Rachel's social initiation and inexplicable death takes place. By contrast, some members of the younger generation show enlightened attitudes towards women and a desire, at least in embryonic form, for an alternative future -- in particular the young Cambridge men who, together with Helen Ambrose, represent the values of Bloomsbury: in favour of women's emancipation, general enlightenment through talk and a certain dismantling of hierarchy. With their contrasting masculine personae they make ineffectual attempts to escape the hegemonic legacy of their male ancestry. Hirst may succeed in tearing himself from the strong brand of male Cambridge homosociality by opting for the Bar in metropolitan London, but for all his subversive inspiration he remains wedded to a conventional career; although with his implied homosexuality and sharply critical high intelligence he retains a forward-looking independence of mind and attitude. For his part, Hewet performs a role as a feminist mouthpiece,<sup>35</sup> and at first seems capable of offering Rachel an alternative, companionate form of marriage. However, his possessiveness and envy of Rachel's independent spirit cause him to fall at the first hurdle in his stated intention to be a "New Husband".

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<sup>35</sup> Marder 1963, 68.

### 5) 'Crimes' and 'atrocities' of patriarchs of the old gender order

Willoughby Vinrace, Rachel's father, an enigmatic figure, is by his own description 'an old-fashioned father' (p.14) in relation to the manner of Rachel's upbringing. Also largely an 'absent father', due to his entrepreneurial travels as a successful ship-owning mercantile capitalist, he can perhaps additionally be categorised as 'neglectful'.<sup>36</sup> Following her mother's death, Rachel's upbringing and childhood education have been relegated to the care of Willoughby's sisters in the secluded respectability of Richmond. This, together with the employment of incompetent tutors, have ensured that her education has been narrow and fragmented.<sup>37</sup> Some awareness of this neglect, and of his own parental incompetence, is evident in Willoughby's somewhat bewildered sense of loss regarding his deceased wife and in his willingness to accept the offer of Helen (his sister-in-law) to take Rachel under her wing, *in loco parentis*, and introduce her into society during the tourist season at the resort. Willoughby's acquiescence in the plan is also motivated by his own political ambitions -- it is the opportunity he has been seeking to bring Rachel out as 'Tory hostess' in furtherance of his ambitions to become a Tory MP. Closely observing his manner with Rachel as they arrive on the ship, Helen characterises Willoughby as 'sentimental' (i.e. 'never simple and honest about his feelings'); in addition, she suspects him 'of nameless atrocities with regard to his daughter, as indeed she had always suspected him of bullying his wife' (17).<sup>38</sup> Whilst these suspicions are never fully substantiated, later in the novel as her intimacy with Terence grows, Rachel is encouraged to speak about her home life and reveals that she and her aunts 'were very much afraid of her father'.

He was a great dim force in the house, by means of which they held on to the great world which is represented every morning in the *Times*. .... He was good humoured towards them, but contemptuous. She had always taken it for granted that his point of view was just, and founded upon an ideal scale of things where the life of one person was absolutely more important than the life of another, and that in that scale they were of much less importance than he was (201).

<sup>36</sup> cf Tosh's typology of father types -- the absent, the tyrannical, the distant and the intimate father (1999, 95-9, 79).

<sup>37</sup> Rachel's education is described by the narrator as the norm for her class and economic standing: 'she had been educated as the majority of well-to-do girls in the last part of the nineteenth century were educated' (26).

<sup>38</sup> Some drafts of the novel are more explicit in suggesting sexual abuse; see Note 51.

Having dutifully internalised the 'atrocities' of her father's contempt for her female inferiority according to the mysterious justice of his 'ideal scale', Rachel is eventually encouraged by Terence's 'instinctive' (though strictly limited) feminism to question her own belief in this order. At the outset she is still 'an unlicked girl' (Helen's phrase), cowed and subservient to her father's wishes and priorities. Observing her, Helen wonders why her friend Theresa, Rachel's mother, had married a bully: the 'big and burly' Willoughby with 'a great booming voice, and a fist and a will of his own' (17). On 'a familiar train of thought' she muses on her friend's and her own marital fortunes, comparing the careers and relative outputs of the two brothers, her husband and her brother-in-law: Ridley the scholar; Willoughby the global man of business. 'Ridley was bringing out the third volume of Pindar when Willoughby was launching his first ship. They built a new factory the very year the commentary on Aristotle -- was it? -- appeared at the University Press' (17). These humorous comparisons of male industry -- academic and entrepreneurial -- set the public world of masculine achievement ('the great world [...] represented every morning in the *Times*') against the alienated separate female domestic sphere, while equating male endeavour with a kind of generalised imperial purpose. Although her husband Ridley is not a bully, Helen's role as wife, according to the prevailing gender order, is determined by her husband's needs and is thus subservient and financially dependent. She is not timidly respectable like Rachel's aunts, but for all her intellectual confidence and enlightened views, she performs a role of domestic subservience and labours emotionally to support her needy and demanding husband in pursuing his career. Helen is greatly admired by the young Cambridge/Bloomsbury types, Hewet and Hirst, and especially by Hirst, for her beauty, wisdom and conversation; her open and direct conversation is a quality never found before in Hirst's, albeit limited, experience of women. Hewet (ironically -- given his own later expectations of Rachel as his fiancée) is however disappointed by the (to him) mystifying compromise involved in Helen's marriage to Ridley -- 'She gave way to him; she spoilt him; she arranged things for him; she who was all truth to others was not true to

her husband, was not true to her friends if they came in conflict with her husband. It was a strange and piteous flaw in her nature' (229).

In this early episode in Woolf's anatomy of the 'sins of the fathers',<sup>39</sup> the dependency upon women of two patriarchal men of the old order, half concealed under bullying contempt or irritable complacency, is revealed as integral to their automatic assumption of superior status, unquestioned right and demand for privileged treatment and reserved space – to be provided by the labour and subservience of wives, daughters and sisters. Such rights, guaranteed under an 'ideal scale of things where the life of one person was absolutely more important than the life of another', are ensured by the complicity of both females and males in daily family crimes. The naivety of Rachel's initial acceptance of the justness of this order, as an aspect of her comprehensive ignorance of the ways of the world, serves as Woolf's way in this novel of questioning the validity of the requirements placed upon her to learn how to conform to this society's norms. By placing Rachel, as childlike and ignorant adult, to this extent outside the role or the 'self' which awaits her,<sup>40</sup> Woolf is able to construct the gendered social order itself as both alien and distant from her, and thus worthy of study as strange, unjust, 'savage' even: an 'amazing concoction' in need of rectification by a genuinely superior civilisation -- towards which end it may also be perhaps worthy of anthropological study. Thus it is the novel's male characters in particular, who are placed within the frame of observation by 'seeing women': Helen and Rachel together; sometimes Rachel on her own. And in the gendered reversal of traditional *Bildung* which is Rachel's failed social initiation, it is male characters in dominant, privileged roles (fathers single-mindedly pursuing careers while being nurtured by subservient wives and daughters; favoured sons receiving elite education and promises of advancement at the expense of their sisters) who perform and commit the criminal damage of traditional gender formation. Fathers create the damaged creature

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<sup>39</sup> Marder (1963) describes Woolf's novels as 'an anatomy of the sins of the fathers' (69).

<sup>40</sup> 'Doing is being' -- in his essay 'Role distance', Goffman (1972), in discussing social conformity, suggests that 'a self virtually awaits the individual entering a position; he need only conform to the pressures on him and he will find a *me* ready-made for him' (87).

which is Rachel; sons fail to rectify the damage because they are complicit in the same gender order.

However, in the novel neither collective nor individual responsibility is explicitly apportioned for the injustice which produces Rachel's condition or for the betrayal of the promise of her youth. The novel's moral framework seems to be structured around a remorseless Darwinian process whereby an ailing and corrupting civilisation fails to nurture and preserve its youth. However, there is little doubt but that the male characters are placed in a frame of ethnographical scrutiny designed to reveal their complicity in Rachel's fate. Meanwhile Helen, periodically visited by feelings of unexplained foreboding, takes responsibility as her guide and mentor, for exposing Rachel, the reluctant and untutored debutante, to these experiences in the first place.

#### **6) Rachel's tutors: anti-hegemonic Bloomsbury masculinity?**

In her reflections on the causes of Rachel's benighted situation the debate which exercises Helen's mind concerns the education of women: 'The question is how should one educate them?' (86). Given her secular faith in the power of art, culture and intellectual conversation to uphold and extend civilised life, her pedagogical solution to rectify Rachel's retarded educational state is exposure to frank, open talk and enlightening reading (i.e. the values of Bloomsbury). She seems, however, to be aware that the means she has to hand in the form of the two young men, is in some key respects wanting. In cultivating these young intellectuals as mentors for Rachel, she is not without qualms about the wisdom of what seems a clumsy intervention in the life of another human being. However, her trust in Rachel's resilience to survive the trials of courtship and benefit from exposure to intellectual stimulus is for the most part firm. Since the young men's ignorance of women is profound, to some extent Rachel's education is a two-way process. While neither of them is able to learn much from Rachel herself, Hirst, for his part, opens his mind to Helen's sage advice and enlightened views. Thus Woolf, in this



early exploration of gendered social roles, both evokes and departs from the conventions of *Bildung*, comically playing with role reversal and role distance in order to expose inequities and contradictions of the traditional gender order. Helen's tentative assumption of responsibility for Rachel's education and socialisation reverses the masculine rationale for the formation of 'the complete gentleman' (enriching the mind with knowledge, rectifying judgement, removing prejudices, and composing outward manners). The gender reversal in the relationship of tutor and novice (Helen's role of guardianship in relation to Rachel) puts the adequacy of the elite masculine learning of the Oxbridge men into question.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, Rachel's education brings much broader, far-reaching questions into the narrative frame: raising doubts, at the very least, about the legitimacy, principles and assumptions which form the basis of male-defined learning and masculine erudition, represented by the heavily traditional curriculum of reading which is recommended to Rachel.<sup>42</sup>

Demonstrating the very limited ability of the clever young men – with all their restless intelligence and elite intellectual training -- to evade the norms of thought and behaviour set by the hegemonic masculinity of their fathers, the novel reveals their shortcomings as guides for Rachel's intellectual and affective formation. However impatient and critical of traditional patriarchal values these two contrasted versions of enlightened Bloomsbury masculinity may be, it is evident that neither has intellectual or moral resources beyond a very narrow mental outlook of masculine privilege. Even though Hewet performs as 'feminist mouthpiece' for enlightened masculine views on the woman question, when his own relationship to his fiancée comes to a decisive moment he displays little genuine awareness of his own dependency upon women's subservience as the basis for his own

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<sup>41</sup> Buzard 2002, 41. Discussing the tutor/guide role in the context of the Grand Tour, Buzard quotes Bacon ('Of Travel', 1625): 'young men [ought to] travel under some tutor or grave servant [who] hath been in the country before'. In later periods the role was often taken by a classically educated Church of England clergyman.

<sup>42</sup> The curriculum recommended for Rachel's enlightenment is prescriptive: for Ridley the Greek classics are the only standard; Richard Dalloway recommends Burke; while Gibbon's method and style constitute the ideal for both Hirst and Hewet. In the genre of fiction Balzac is suggested by Ridley. Only Hirst departs from these masculine standards: he reveals that he is reading *Widekind*, and also allows Mrs Flushing to 'gobble up' his copy of Swinburne's translation of Sappho during the Sunday morning service.

position of socially sanctioned dominance and assumed superiority. The novel thus poses large questions regarding gender and power, and deploys an embryonic set of methods for their analysis; it sets a political agenda and identifies both material and technique which Woolf will use in her consistently developing study of masculinity throughout her writing career.

Hirst's initial boldly stated misogyny is tempered as he gets to know and like Rachel. His ignorance of women (as monumental, but very different from Rachel's ignorance of men) is expressed as nervous hostility and appalling insensitivity in the dance scene when he unwillingly makes himself dance with Rachel.

'Have you got a mind, or are you like the rest of your sex? You seem to me absurdly young compared with men of your age. [...] It's awfully difficult to tell about women', he continued, 'how much, I mean is due to lack of training, and how much is native incapacity' (141).

While the narrative leaves pointedly unresolved the question as to whether Rachel's ignorance is innate or socially produced, she is mercifully rescued by Hewet from this intellectual impasse. Meanwhile Hirst, as if in compensation for the gauche and ignorant brutality of his treatment of Rachel, is presented for the first time in his life with an encounter with a thinking woman: the experience of being able to talk to a woman (Helen) 'quite plainly as one does to a man' is remarkable for him. Beyond this, the fact that 'a barrier which usually stands fast had fallen, and it was possible to speak of matters which are generally only alluded to between men and women when doctors are present, or the shadow of death', is liberating for him (not least in respect of his homosexuality). Helen suggests that Hirst should speak in similar terms to Rachel, to help complete the education of one who has 'been brought up practically in a nunnery', to explain to her 'the facts of life' – 'What really goes on, what people feel, although they generally try to hide it. [...] There's nothing to be frightened at. It's so much more beautiful than the pretences' (150). It is not made clear exactly how far Hirst is subsequently able to take forward this part of Helen's project to induct Rachel into Bloomsbury values and the path of seeking truth below the surface of things.

Hirst does, however, play a significant background role in a further 'pedagogical scene' of Rachel's 'coming out', playing a subversive counterpoint (reading Sappho in the back pew) to her epiphany of horror at the religious cant of the Reverend Bax's sermon. The Sunday morning service shows further proof of Rachel's developing independence of mind – 'for the first time in her life' she 'listened critically to what was being said'. 'All round her were people pretending to feel what they did not feel'; and as she watches with revulsion the obviously feigned devotions of the 'slavishly acquiescent' nurse (the same nurse who later haunts Rachel's sickroom as she is dying), it is 'suddenly revealed to her what Helen and St John meant when they proclaimed their hatred of Christianity' (216).

Suspended for a while between divergent versions of educated English masculinity, Rachel has some space in which to develop her own judgements and conclusions, and in this she is assisted by her reading of 'moderns' such as Ibsen and Meredith.<sup>43</sup> Although the monumental nature of the reading which is recommended by her male advisors is repeatedly emphasised, the narrative does not reveal how Rachel gains access to a curriculum more oriented to feminism, and evidently much more to her liking. Rachel's choice and experience of reading, combined with conversations which reflect and extend its influence and import, figure in the novel as the major zone of her intellectual development.

The irony of Hewet's role as feminist instructor to Rachel as he woos her, is that once they become engaged he proves incapable of not subordinating her to his own needs as fiancé, husband-to-be, and writer of path-breaking modern novels. He declares himself amazed at '[t]he respect that women, even well-educated, very able women, have for men. ... I believe we must have the sort of power over you that we're said to have over horses. They see us three times as big as we are or they'd never obey us'. Yet he claims

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<sup>43</sup> Jane Marcus (1988) suggests that 'sensitive male writers' of the late nineteenth century, such as Wilde, Meredith, Ibsen and Hardy, provided Woolf with a 'coherent literary seedbed' which nourished her genius and helped her develop a feminist method and style in her fiction. These exponents of 'the antipatriarchal art of the other sex' could, 'with less fear of reprisal, express that anger of their women characters in more open ways than women writers' (xix).

not to understand the basis of men's power, seeing it as somehow magical, although recognising that it is commonly sustained by violence and coercion. 'Consider what a bully the ordinary man is, ... the ordinary hard-working, rather ambitious solicitor or man of business with a family to bring up and a certain position to maintain' (196). In response to Rachel's question as to whether he, the kindly seeming Terence -- and other men -- are 'really like that', he claims his private income exempts him from the cycle of oppression and relieves him of the need to play the bullying and shoving masculine role. Moreover, his career as novelist, not being a 'serious' profession, exempts him from having to compete for 'appointments, [...] offices and a title, and lots of letters after his name, and bits of ribbon and degrees'. In wooing Rachel, he wishes to open her eyes to the 'amazing concoction' and ludicrous 'miracle' of 'the masculine conception of life',<sup>44</sup> 'instinctively' adopting a critical feminist stance as if he knows how to win her. His ridicule of the public ceremonials of masculine power and public markers of distinction and achievement, seems to suggest that he is capable of offering Rachel something different from her father's 'ideal scale' as a measure of human value and social worth.<sup>45</sup> Yet, once engaged to marry Rachel, all too soon he over-rides her reluctance to fulfil social obligations which she knows to be demeaning and intrusive; and he shifts from his earlier love-struck celebration of artistic affinities between her music and his writing to a manly assertion of the more serious nature of his own work and his expectation of wifely support. Despite his claims to feminist sympathies, telling instances of Terence's (seemingly helpless) lapsing into conventional patterns of response and behaviour, effectively define him as a male obedient to the norms of the old order, rather than as a credible adherent of some benign new order valuing freedom and equality between the sexes.

Rachel's response to Terence's wooing is sometimes warm, but overall is at best half-hearted: a curiously passive and ambivalent acceptance of an outcome that comes to

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<sup>44</sup> Woolf uses the same or similar terms and images in the more developed discussions of these themes in *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*.

<sup>45</sup> As Sage (1992) points out, 'Hewet, addressing Rachel in imagination, says 'I'd keep you free', and again the ironies close in' (xxvi).

seem inevitable.<sup>46</sup> In unwillingly consenting to appear in public as Terence's fiancée she accedes to an act of exchange between men (woman as chattel: herself) with the same passive compliance she has learned in habitually acceding to her father's priorities. While Terence exerts no overt violence, the 'great dim force' of her father's bullying masculinity seems to lurk behind the marital exchange. This is briefly glimpsed as Rachel's engagement is socially ratified at Mrs. Thornbury's tea-party – behind the hostess's 'kindly questions' there seems to be a note of entrapment and complicity, and a calculating appraisal in her sympathetic look:

Mrs Thornbury, after watching them all for a time in silence, began to ask Rachel kindly questions – When did they all go back? Oh, they expected her father. She must want to see her father – there would be a great deal to tell him, and (she looked sympathetically at Terence) he would be happy, she felt sure (304).

At the next moment, Rachel's (bullied) mother is even more briefly glimpsed, in Mrs Thornbury's dim memory of 'a very sweet looking woman' with Mr. Vinrace when she fleetingly met him at a party years ago. Rachel's place in the kinship and social network which assures the propriety of the exchange is thus identified. Before the tea-party, which celebrates two engagements (that of the model conventional couple and her own to Terence), Rachel is found sitting in the gloomy hotel lobby in a characteristic state of semi-reverie (Terence asleep beside her). As she watches the afternoon procession of hotel guests passing in front of her, she is comforted by the impression they give of certainty about where they are going. Whereas her own progress to her present position seems to have been blundering and arbitrary: 'one did not know where one was going, or what one wanted, and followed blindly, suffering so much in secret, always unprepared and amazed and knowing nothing'.

Rachel's sense of detachment from the social ritual she is about to take part in looks forward to Woolf's later use in *Three Guineas* of the 'procession' as metaphor for compliant, obedient participation in the rituals and conventions of the masculine public

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<sup>46</sup> Poole (1995) suggests that Woolf's first two novels (*VO*, *ND*) 'are both explicitly about the problem of getting engaged, and the attendant problem of how to feel something emotionally as well as sexually for the preferred or prospective partner' (33).

world, and to the strategic political question she poses about whether newly professional women should join the tail-end of the procession or not. In this early novel the image suggests Rachel's victimhood and bemused uncertainty as to whether she can indeed pass from the position of observing outsider to one of engaged participant. In the polemic of 1938 Woolf's outsider position proclaims a considered refusal of masculine norms: Rachel's confused feeling of detachment is transformed into the explicit political stance of the Outsiders' Society.

A distinction of a symbolic kind is drawn between Hirst and Hewet in terms of their respective places in the 'pattern' which the novel as a whole weaves, placing the characters in a landscape. The two couples of the quartet (Helen and St John; Rachel and Terence), who are engaged in the project of Rachel's enlightenment, are differently located in the landscape, one couple (Helen and St John) oriented towards a landscape peopled with human habitation, while Rachel and Terence are placed against an 'impersonal and hostile' landscape. Hirst, having with Helen's solicitous help finally decided on his career (to leave the enclosed homosocial world of Cambridge and 'go to the Bar' in London) is congratulated and, as it were, 'placed' in an accommodating world by Helen: 'You'll be a great man, I'm certain' (192).

By contrast, Hewet and Rachel are placed on a cliff, looking down on the sea. Behind them is a vast landscape:

spreading away and away like the immense floor of the sea ... and the races of men changed from dark savages to white civilised men, and back to dark savages again. Perhaps their English blood made this prospect uncomfortably impersonal and hostile to them, for having once turned their faces that way they next turned them to the sea. [...] It was this sea that flowed up to the mouth of the Thames; and the Thames washed the roots of the city of London (194).

Chilled and diminished by the vast sweep of this alien history the couple choose to look the other way, towards England, to a return desired by Terence but not by Rachel. She appears indifferent to what attracts him about his life in England: 'My friends chiefly [...] and all the things one does'. She is uncomprehending too about his feminist-inspired

views and resistant of his intrusive interest in her – 'Doesn't it make your blood boil? If I were a woman I'd blow someone's brains out. Don't you laugh at us a great deal? Don't you think it all a great humbug? You, I mean – how does it all strike you?' (201). As Gordon points out, Rachel's capacity to respond to such questioning is extremely limited, to the point of an almost complete inarticulacy and passivity – 'she appears passive, malleable, and pitifully lacking in the animation which we expect from heroines. [...] Her author dared to make her faceless, inarticulate, incompetent, and, except for her music, inactive to the point of indolence' (2006, 131). Thus she rebuffs Terence's invitations to assist him in analysing the nature of women's characteristics for his next novel by retreating into the interiority of 'the steep spiral of the very late Beethoven sonata' she has been practising:

Attacking her staircase once more, Rachel again neglected this opportunity of revealing the secrets of her sex. She had, indeed, advanced so far in the pursuit of wisdom that she allowed these secrets to rest undisturbed; it seemed to her reserved for a later generation to discuss them philosophically (275).

Woolf seems here to suggest through Rachel's evasions that a fuller response to Terence's questions and a resolution to her existential dilemma can only be addressed by posterity, or – perhaps more immediately and more methodically – in her own later writing.

## **7) Conclusion**

In assessing the success of Woolf's first novel, Lee is critical of what she sees as an 'imbalance between satire and abstraction', that the two levels at which the novel operates ('a literal satirical account of Rachel's development' and 'an abstract argument about existence') are not sufficiently integrated to be able to carry effectively the 'difficult and obscure argument which really interests her'.<sup>47</sup> Lee is also critical about the ambiguity of Rachel's death – whether it is inevitable or arbitrary. While it is arbitrary 'at the level of plot and character development', it can also be seen as inevitable and conclusive as the

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<sup>47</sup> Lee 1977, 36, 41.

furthest point of Rachel's voyage, providing an 'ultimate, remote perspective on the world' (51). An autoethnographic reading of the novel, which has been attempted in this chapter, suggests a middle way between these contraries (which Lee sees as structural weaknesses in the novel), and is also consistent with Darwinian readings which emphasise the search for an underlying pattern in the world's natural order (e.g. Beer 1996, Gordon 2006).<sup>48</sup> This early attempt, as Woolf embarks on her writing career, to anatomise (as if from afar with an ethnographer's appraising eye) the social and gender order of the masculine dominated world in which Rachel fails to find an appropriate place (as wife, independent woman or citizen), foreshadows the approach and methods she will use in her later fiction and in her political writing to construct masculinity and to develop a method for a cultural analysis of the values of the Victorian patriarchy under which she herself grew up.

Poole sees *The Voyage Out* as 'a palimpsest' – the 'early forms of which were written by a young woman who was not yet married, and the novel was finished by a woman whose honeymoon was just over and whose so-called 'madness' was about to recur'.<sup>49</sup> Emphasis on the novel's long process of layered composition and parallel events in Woolf's own life points also to ways in which the novel's political themes of gender and power must have shifted and developed during this period of drafting and restructuring. The political import of the novel would seem to be tied to the suggestive but unresolved question of Rachel's demise. The random-seeming chance of her death, as arbitrary as the apparent promise of her voyage out and her aunt's well-intentioned interference in her life, places the agency of her aspiring young womanhood in Darwinian struggle against historical forces generated by and in a social system defined by the pre-eminently masculine endeavours and priorities of empire-building men. The masculine learning of Oxbridge type, which she is encouraged to acquire, is tainted by the same priorities.

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<sup>48</sup> Gordon (2006) suggests '[t]he novelist spies Rachel like Darwin or like some watcher of the skies' (123).

<sup>49</sup> Poole 1995, 33.



From such a 'concoction': 'the masculine conception of the world' (Hewet's words), Rachel sickens and dies.

The satire of Rachel's unachieved *Bildung* looks forward to the deliberate subversion of conventions of the *Bildungsroman* in *Jacob's Room*; with the significant difference that in the later novel Jacob resists (or fails to respond to) aspects of masculine formation which are inscribed in his male heritage; whereas Rachel is passively exposed as a *tabula rasa* upon which influential interested parties compete to make their marks. As a social ingénue (typifying the disempowered isolation of women of her class) she is, opportunely and somewhat belatedly, offered a compromised choice between options defined by the masculine conspiracy which is patriarchy.<sup>50</sup> Seemingly rescued from the passive compliance exacted by her bullying, abusive father, she almost falls into the trap of marriage proposed by Hewet. Hewet's seductions are informed by feminist arguments. His Bloomsbury-ite disdain for the trappings of traditional patriarchal authority (ceremonials, honours, etc.) and for the bullying and shoving required by careerism, marks the superficial limit of his enlightenment. Once his need for female submission to elevate his sense of his own masculine superiority is exposed (Rachel's musicianship to be sacrificed so that she, as dutiful wife, can support his budding career as novelist) his own arguments about the 'amazing concoction' of 'the masculine conception of life' are turned against himself. Faced with this betrayal (not evident as such to the insouciant Hewet) Rachel's resolve (whether consciously, unconsciously or instinctively made) is to withdraw (perhaps with insufficiently explained cause) from the *illusio* of the social game.<sup>51</sup> Such an interpretation of Rachel's demise, as part of Woolf's device for locating her as a type of female passivity in history (i.e. without political consciousness or agency), places her in contrast to Jacob Flanders. Whereas Rachel's death only partially and retrospectively throws light on the contradictions of her situation, Jacob's absence and his

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<sup>50</sup> *Three Guineas*, 121.

<sup>51</sup> Gordon (2006) comments that the novel falls short in its failure to specify what politically informs Rachel's refusal and in her inability to articulate what a woman might be -- although the book moves towards such a definition, it is 'foiled by Rachel's unsure muteness ... the thoughts that surge behind her silence remain sadly half-formed' (123). Gordon develops an interpretation which explains Rachel's silence in terms of the effects of childhood sexual abuse, a revelation which she does in part manage (in a draft of the novel) to convey to Hewet.

ambivalent stance against social conformity structurally inform that whole novel (*Jacob's Room*, the first of Woolf's novels to be written in her 'own voice').

## CHAPTER 6

### Empire and War

#### 1) Introduction

In her trilogy of war novels of the 1920s<sup>1</sup> Woolf radically transformed her fictional methods in searching for a mode of representation adequate to the demands of the contemporary moment: a method capable of recording the unprecedented turbulence of social and political change experienced by her generation in the early twentieth century period of the First World War and its aftermath. Broadly exploring the historical contexts of war and demise of empire, the novels illustrate the structural infirmity of masculine imperial/colonial hegemony due to over-reached national commitment to war in defence of a waning Empire. An international crisis of imperialism is accompanied by anxiety about social change on the home front, particularly changes in gender relations – already evident prewar improvements in the position of women were accelerated by the war.<sup>2</sup> In considering how to respond as a writer to such conditions, Woolf casts a searching, critical eye upon methods used in the past. In *The Common Reader* (1925) she singles out the Greek dramatists, Defoe, Austen, the Brontës, George Eliot, the Russians (Chekov and Dostoyevsky), the First World War poets (Owen and Sassoon), as models suggesting different kinds of techniques for her modern purposes.<sup>3</sup> Venturing into 'the dark places of psychology' to represent a new, 'modern' consciousness which she perceived as emerging in this period (unrecognisable and 'impossible for our fathers' to comprehend), she develops a radically innovative approach focusing upon 'the differences which have not been noted' between present and past, rather than upon the all too 'perfectly expressed' *resemblances* of the present to the past in the writing of her immediate Edwardian predecessors.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wilson (1996) demonstrates how *Jacob's Room*, *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* anticipate the theme and argument of *Three Guineas*.

<sup>2</sup> Whitworth 2005, 51.

<sup>3</sup> To these Woolf offers her 'gratitudes' while 'hostilities' are reserved for her immediate male predecessors in the tradition, the Edwardian 'materialists' – 'Mr. Wells, Mr. Bennett, and Mr. Galsworthy. 'Modern Fiction', *The Common Reader*, 146.

<sup>4</sup> 'How It Strikes A Contemporary', *The Common Reader*, 235; my emphasis.

This chapter focuses particularly on *Mrs Dalloway* and *To The Lighthouse*, which both emphasise the historical disjuncture and psychological displacement of war. These acclaimed modernist novels anatomise an uneasy, questioning modern consciousness within and against the historical conditions which shape it. Glancing back, in terms of its theme, at *The Voyage Out* (Woolf's first venture into imperial territory) and at *Jacob's Room*, the chapter looks forwards to *The Waves* (also shot through with imperial and colonial references) and to *Three Guineas*, which of all Woolf's texts most directly addresses the intricate connections she perceived between masculinity, empire and war. The novels of the 1920s and *The Common Reader* (an alternative genealogy of the novel in English) indicate how Woolf prepared the ground for a writing project which was to occupy her for the rest of her writing career. While war and its consequences are treated indirectly in the mid-career novels, key characters are located in history through structural devices which emphasise the profound (but incommensurate) effect of war upon postwar consciousness.<sup>5</sup> In *Jacob's Room* the unfilled space left by the departed young man registers loss, disjuncture and the interruption of traditional male succession. The portrait in *Mrs Dalloway* of the shell-shocked Septimus Smith draws attention to damage done to the minds and bodies of war survivors and to the peculiarly English class phenomenon of the 'temporary gentleman': in this case a lower middle class clerk who 'won crosses' (i.e. was a war hero) only to become a victim of the medical establishment.<sup>6</sup> The return of the repressed in the shape of the shell-shocked and suicidal war veteran destabilizes an already uneasy postwar atmosphere, questioning the complacency of patriotic sentiment and the authenticity of public ceremonies and memorials to the war dead.

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<sup>5</sup> Gordon (2006) comments that in *To The Lighthouse* Woolf 'devised a counter-history in which war is not the centre-piece but a vacant period through which time rushes. In 'Time Passes' ... there are no people, only reports of the dead, given in brackets'. The 'affront' to conventional historical narrative in the 'new distorted design' of the novels of the 1920s, in Gordon's view, comes out of 'an outrage so complete' in her resistance to war 'that, taking a line more extreme than anti-war poets, she refused to treat war at all' (202, 206).

<sup>6</sup> Pick (1989, 231) notes the proportionately much greater instances of mental damage ('shellshock') suffered by officers than by men in the ranks, and the impact of this upon the much vaunted public school training in manliness.

In *To The Lighthouse* a complex set of social and individual factors produce the changed psychic environment of the novel's third section, 'The Lighthouse', while the war itself is figured in the second section, 'Time Passes', as a monstrous submerged struggle of implacable natural forces, identified with 'male destructiveness and sexual brutality'.<sup>7</sup>

While very different in structure and conceptual framing, the two novels are linked in terms of how Freudian theories of personality and sexuality can be productively employed as interpretive strategies, especially with regard to the way in which they inform understanding of conflicts of generational change and indicate risk and uncertainty in the succession of dominant roles and authority. The chapter explores how this shifting worldview is constructed, focusing particularly on how in the representation of male characters, masculinity and its anachronistic codes of behaviour appear as being increasingly under pressure of change, as class alliances and patterns of social relations shift. In a historical period when the military and imperial bulwarks which had sustained a traditional model of masculine hegemony were breached under unprecedented conditions of industrial scale warfare, and already had been undermined as British imperial dominance waned, the old order is shown as clinging with steadfast but fading vigour to old, familiar patterns of social being – while simultaneously, new potentialities for social and gender identity are in process of being created. In the novels focused on here, male characters who are capable of responding to new possibilities (chafing under and/or straining to escape from conventional gender norms) include the déclassé Septimus Smith and the (relatively) marginalized Peter Walsh in *Mrs Dalloway*, and James Ramsay in *To The Lighthouse*, undergoing and not yet fully emerged from a series of formatively bruising encounters in a protracted oedipal struggle with his father.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Haule 1991 in Hussey 1991, 166.

<sup>8</sup> Alongside these male characters, in similar but differently gendered struggle, stand Clarissa Dalloway, her daughter Elizabeth (perhaps) and Elizabeth's tutor, Miss Kilman; and Cam Ramsay and Lily Briscoe. Although space does not permit full consideration of Woolf's female characters in this respect, the chapter's discussion will give some attention to these female characters as well.

While the detail of Woolf's debt to and use of Freud remains open to speculation and careful reconstruction (e.g. as in Abel's readings),<sup>9</sup> it is noteworthy that both Woolf and Freud shared interest and concern in the social consequences of war and its historical significance in setting a limit on civilisation as a human potential. The epistolary form of Freud's *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death* (1915), and his public exchange of letters with Einstein on the topic of how world war could be stopped<sup>10</sup>, and the Hogarth Press's publication *The Hogarth Letters* (1933),<sup>11</sup> are all echoed in the form of *Three Guineas* (1938), Woolf's epistolary exchange across boundaries of gender debating the grounds and conditions for viable, collaborative action to end war. Freud's *Thoughts* include shock and distress at a climate of intellectual blindness in which war propaganda could so evidently flourish: 'the narrow-mindedness shown by the best intellects', public 'obduracy, inaccessibility to the most forcible arguments' and 'uncritical credulity for the most disputable assertions' (13). And the general sense of disillusionment at the failure of supposedly civilised society to suppress 'baser passions' and the widespread perpetration of 'deeds of cruelty, fraud, treachery and barbarity' (5), combine to provoke his sardonic comment: 'In reality our fellow-citizens had not sunk so low as we feared, because they had never risen so high as we believed' (10).

On the question of atonement for acts of violence and the return of the soldier from war, Freud finds the loss of ethical law by modern man to be deeply at odds with an otherwise welcome civilising diminution of 'that hate-gratification which lurked behind grief for loved dead [which] was gradually extended to unloved strangers and finally even to enemies'. Far from being a 'savage superstition', the requirement among 'still extant "primitive" peoples' that returning soldiers must atone with "'prolonged and toilsome" penances' before they may set foot in the village or touch a wife 'is nothing but the expression of our

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<sup>9</sup> Abel (1989) argues that Woolf alters Freud's framework, making use of Melanie Klein's reworking of his theory to suggest an alternative oedipal outcome by giving greater prominence to the mother's role.

<sup>10</sup> Einstein and Freud 1933.

<sup>11</sup> *The Hogarth Letters* include contributions from Louis Golding, 'A Letter to Adolph Hitler', Viscount Cecil, 'A Letter to an MP on Disarmament', and from Virginia Woolf, 'A Letter to a Young Poet'.

own conscience' behind which 'lurks a vein of ethical sensitiveness which has been lost by civilised man' (21). Woolf explores this ethical question through her portrait of the un-manned Septimus Smith. Like Jacob Flanders he represents a sacrificed generation of male youth; but in his case brutally exposed as he returns to civilian life among an uncomprehending and indifferent population.<sup>12</sup> The shaken foundations of traditional, imperial and gentlemanly masculinity are revealed in that postwar moment of the return of the soldier.

## **2) Historical context**

Mayer's account (2010) in *The Persistence of the Old Regime* of a backward-looking old guard seeking, in the second half of the nineteenth century and up to the First World War, to preserve its historical privileges against the forces of change, provides a relevant historical background to Virginia Woolf's fictional representations of gender and power under a backward-looking masculine hegemony. Her postwar novels of the 1920s depict a patriarchal order, seen through a psychoanalytically attuned lens focused upon the domestic sphere, in process of losing its ideological and psychological grip upon the consciousness of the younger generation. Mayer prefaces his account of the impulse towards total war in Europe with some discussion about the role of high culture, and particularly of architectural style, in providing symbols and images 'that served to thwart, dignify, and disguise the present' (190). Neo-Gothic architecture in London post 1840 reflects the efforts of the Gothic revival across Europe to endow cities 'with a cultural legacy calculated to reconcile the accomplishments and ravages of capitalism with the old order' (197).

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<sup>12</sup> Eksteins (*Rites of Spring* 1989, xv) explicitly connects the Unknown Soldier with the sacrificial victim in Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* (1913), and also cites Winter, J. M. 1977 'Britain's "Lost Generation" of the First World War', *Population Studies*, 31 March, 454: 'enlistment was highest among men in the professions and in commercial and clerical occupations' (190). Septimus Smith, clerk at 'Sibleys and Arrowsmiths, auctioneers, land and estate agents', 'was one of the first to volunteer' (MD 93-4).

Woolf's portrait in *Mrs Dalloway* of a day in the life of London and Londoners in June 1923 pays close attention to the city's topography and architecture: institutions, gentlemen's clubs, imperial statues and war memorials. Cultural symbols embedded in its architecture contribute to the contradictory mood of the city on this day. Peter Walsh's reflections on the statues of British Imperial and military heroes -- Nelson, Gordon<sup>13</sup>, Havelock -- evoke a past spirit of heroic masculinity, 'renunciation' and civilising endeavour; but it is doubtful whether their 'marble stare' can recapture any of the old certainty to make sense of this volatile postwar moment. As the successor generation ignore or try to assess the consequences of recent conflict, they vacillate between clinging to symbolic relics of a mythologized past and hailing new manifestations of change. A striking sign of the coming age is the sky-writing aeroplane in the opening sequence of *Mrs Dalloway*, which combines menace and ever resilient, modernising commercial enterprise: ace pilot turns sinister war machine into advertising gimmick. As with the 'gunshot' -- or rather backfiring -- which announces the presence in the streets of a mysterious official car, a cowed and impressionable populace is ready to jump either way -- in horror or wonder.

In a discussion of fundamental 'Victorianism' and its linguistic attributes, Franco Moretti further explores aspects of Mayer's argument about the contradictory nature of the late nineteenth century class alliance between the old aristocracy and the bourgeoisie in England.<sup>14</sup> 'Blindness', 'disavowal' and 'fog' are key elements in a cultural formation which works to disguise present realities with vague moralizing, sentiment and borrowed symbols. Unable to provide out of its own cultural storehouse sufficient 'justification' for the harsh social circumstances produced by the economic system it championed, Moretti suggests that in the latter half of the century 'a feudal-Christian *déjà-là* was mobilised' by the ruling bourgeoisie; and this reconstructing nostalgia is evident in the work of certain

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<sup>13</sup> '... all that I've been through, he thought, crossing the road, and standing under Gordon's statue, Gordon whom as a boy he had worshipped; Gordon standing lonely with one leg raised and his arms crossed, -- poor Gordon, he thought.' (*MD* 56).

<sup>14</sup> Moretti, F. 2013.



literary and polemical ideologues (Tennyson, Arnold, Carlyle, amongst others).<sup>15</sup> A 'shared symbolism of the upper classes' made the power-sharing alliance of the bourgeois and upper classes harder to challenge since it involved 'the adornment of present might with ancient right; the ethical rewriting of social relations' (85).

Similar ideological camouflage operates in the modernising appropriation of the medieval concepts of honour and status. Ute Frevert notes how the language of patriotism and nationalism, gaining currency during and after the French Revolution, 'dwelt on deeply antagonistic imagery'. In her survey of the eruption of communications between opposing sides in July 1914, which resulted in multiple declarations of war a month later, she shows how these exchanges were 'largely framed in a language of honor'.<sup>16</sup> Citing Weber – '[e]xperience teaches that claims to prestige have always played into the origin of wars' – she refers to his account of the internal dynamic of political power structures to demonstrate consonance between 'the realm of honor' and 'the status order'.

The sentiment of prestige is able to strengthen the ardent belief in the actual existence of one's own might, and this is important for positive self-assurance in the case of conflict. Therefore, all those having vested interests in the political structure tend systematically to cultivate this prestige sentiment.<sup>17</sup>

Weber outlines processes whereby concepts of honour, which were intrinsic to a pre-modern world of social stratification within estates or status groups (rather than in classes defined by the market), evolved into the values of 'prestige' and 'reputation' as accrued in modern structures of political power. This ethic, belonging to a mediaeval aristocratic order, 'made personal relations central to conduct of life and impressed every individual with the obligations of a status honor that was jointly held and thus a unifying bond for the status group as a whole'. According to Weber, 'status honor stands in sharp opposition to

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<sup>15</sup> Nye (see footnote 7) quotes Norbert Elias on the historical resilience of certain kinds of language: 'Linguistic terms may fall into a state of sleep at certain times, but may 'acquire a new existential value from a new social situation. They are recalled because something in the present state of society finds expression in the crystallization of the past embodied in the words', (Elias 1978, 7) Nye 1993, 151.

<sup>16</sup> Elements of the 'lexicon of honor' which were most frequently employed and alluded to in diplomatic and other levels of communication (including speeches by Keir Hardie, Ramsay MacDonald and Lloyd George) in this prelude to war were: humiliation; insult; shame; challenge; satisfaction; offence. Frevert 2007, 238.

<sup>17</sup> Weber 1978, 910-12.

the pretensions of sheer property'; and this medieval tradition had continued to exert powerful influence among the upper classes in Europe. Thus current notions of an 'ideal of manliness' and 'conduct of life' clearly demonstrate that chivalric conceptions of 'feudal knighthood' and chivalry 'still served as a crucial 'center of orientation'.<sup>18</sup>

Frevert's linking of the language of dueling to the heightened fury of political and diplomatic exchanges in July 1914 – which 'forced participants into a deadlock that resulted in war' (234) – echoes Robert Nye's history of the cult of the duel in France as a background to the construction of masculinity in the post-revolutionary era, and his examination of the discourse of honour which emerged in the second half of the Nineteenth Century to articulate 'an ideal of reinvigorated republican manhood' with the social and political values of a new democratic order.<sup>19</sup> Nye's discussion addresses the insecure bases of masculine authority in both public and private spheres. As 'an ideological construct designed to conceal the weakness of male claims to a monopoly of power' the doctrine of separate spheres both warrants and exposes the limits of assumed masculine predominance.<sup>20</sup>

Both Nye and Bourdieu acknowledge the fundamental importance of sexual difference in constructing identity and individual image of the world:

It is not hard to imagine the weight that the opposition between masculinity and femininity must bring to bear on the construction of self-image and world-image when this opposition constitutes the fundamental principle of the division of the social and the symbolic world.<sup>21</sup>

Given the demonstration in anthropological studies of the graphically material form that 'criteria of male identity' in 'traditional' societies may take (will power located in the

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<sup>18</sup> Frevert 2007, 237, citing Weber 1978, 1068.

<sup>19</sup> 'The instrumentality that facilitated this process of adaptation was a male code of honor that survived the destruction of the Old Regime in 1789 by accommodating its practices and usages to the unique sociability and legal arrangements of bourgeois civilization'. Nye 1993, 9.

<sup>20</sup> Nye suggests that the doctrine of separate spheres to some extent derives from Rousseau. 'Rousseau's notion that individual freedom and equality were (natural) rights arising in a state of nature was inseparable in his thought from his belief in the similarly natural origins of sex.' Thus Rousseau 'problematised sex by making sexual difference a political problem and politics a biological one' (Nye, 49).

<sup>21</sup> Bourdieu 1990, 78.

genitals; the deficiency of the cuckold; association between effeminacy and cowardice, etc.), Nye concludes that 'the irony of male authority in such societies is that the considerable power males possess by virtue of their masculinity is exceedingly fragile, is open to constant challenge, and produces keen feelings of vulnerability in men' (10). Nye and Bourdieu share an interest in adapting such studies to contemporary western societies, but neither underestimates the challenge of

the subtle and difficult task for the anthropologist to accurately observe and interpret sexual identity in a small and relatively undifferentiated culture at a particular moment in time; it would be a labor of inconceivable difficulty for a historian to fully construct the relation of all bodies – male and female – to a social order in a complex, multilayered society over an extended period.<sup>22</sup>

Nye's solution to this problem in his historical study of masculinity in France is to make use of the 'instrumentality' of 'the male code of honor' to identify changing criteria for masculine performance. The discourse of chivalry allowed liberals to 'celebrate a richer and deeper moral heritage than could be devised from egoistic doctrines of liberal economics and legal individualism'. New versions of manliness borrowed not only from 'stoic models of a revived classicism which put a premium on high moral principle and virtue',<sup>23</sup> but also from 'the quality of courage in the warrior ethic that was the irreducible core of the French patriotic tradition' (150).<sup>24</sup> Meanwhile Bourdieu, in his late work *Masculine Domination*, re-visits his own fieldwork on 'traditional' Mediterranean society to speculate on its application to contemporary European societies. In doing so he cites Virginia Woolf's designation of 'the hypnotic power of domination' as key to defining a psychological basis for masculine authority and female subordination.

As against this background of a rich syncretic genealogy behind bourgeois conceptions of manliness, Mayer's account of 'the European War' of 1914-18 traces its origins to a reactionary backlash throughout Europe against nineteenth century enlightenment, which

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<sup>22</sup> Nye 1993, 7.

<sup>23</sup> Blum, C. 1986. *Rousseau and the republic of virtue: the language of politics in the French Revolution* (133) cited by Nye (53).

<sup>24</sup> Nye traces the origins of this ethic: 'Guizot following Tacitus believed [it] had descended from the military rites of the ancient Germanic tribes' (150). Woolf also draws on this tradition in her use of Wagnerian mythology: e.g. Parsifal/Percival in *The Waves*.

did much to create the political conditions for 'total war'. He argues that the old aristocratic elites, across the spectrum of nation states, used the general crisis in late nineteenth century European politics (fomented to a significant extent by themselves) to consolidate their hegemony over the bourgeoisie. Distinguishing between 'governing' and 'ruling' classes, he suggests that in this period there existed from the 'absolutist empires of Central and Eastern Europe' to the 'parliamentary regimes of Western Europe', a compromise between class interests which permitted landed, conservative interests to maintain political ascendancy and dominance over the bourgeoisie, including even in England where bourgeois industrial interests were relatively much more economically powerful than elsewhere in Europe.

Although the hegemonic, aristocratically-oriented, ruling class 'took account of bourgeois interests and harnessed industrial capitalism for its own purposes', it was historically regressive in outlook and 'governed according to pre-capitalist patterns' (303). Mayer argues that the enormous cultural and political influence of the thought of Darwin and Nietzsche, 'the towering figures of their time' (their ideas simplistically summed up in the over-used catch-phrases: 'survival of the fittest' and 'will to power'), penetrated in the second half of the nineteenth century 'into the storehouse of anti-progressive and anti-liberal ideas and attitudes'. They were a significant ideological factor in maintaining the balance of political forces and a general cultural tendency towards 'historical regression' rather than towards 'enlightened progress' or the innovative challenges championed by modernism (281, 304, 14). Social Darwinism was crucial to the 're-mobilisation' of the old order in this period. As a highly adaptable mode of thought, it became 'the dominant worldview of Europe's ruling and governing classes', owing much of its powerful influence to its 'syncretic quality' and ambiguity. In an age increasingly torn between science and faith, ambiguity regarding the nature of the struggle for existence and the criteria for selection of species types ensured that Darwinian and Nietzschean ideas, and derived versions of them, reached a wide and receptive audience. 'Social Darwinism enhanced its credibility through seeming to explain laws of social development by applying the

rational and empirical methods used to study natural evolution' -- it thus could provide 'both a fiercely conservative and a mildly progressive reading of the struggle for existence', being able to validate both an out-and-out Hobbesian view of 'war of all against all' as well as a general, milder justification for forward social evolution. Hence, for example, advocates of economic laissez-faire 'could construe the principles of evolution and selection as warranting unlimited competition', while agrarian and industrial protectionists 'could interpret them as sanctioning the new mercantilism' (283).<sup>25</sup>

Social Darwinist precepts also served to bolster belief in the permanent nature of existing divisions within the social hierarchy: between the 'ruling and governing minorities with their superior qualities' and 'the multitudes with their demeaning passions'. The supposed superior attributes of the dominant minorities, however, were 'never spelled out with precision' -- the elite were simply 'presumed to have the capacity to make deliberate, rational and moral decisions that would be forever beyond the reach of the masses' (291). As Mayer puts it, 'Social Darwinism and elitism grew out of the same subsoil'; and both sought to reverse the social gains of nineteenth century enlightenment and to counter pressures from below for political, social and cultural leveling and democratization (285). Daniel Pick's study of nineteenth-century notions of degeneration in Italy, France and England discusses the 'plurality of connotations' linked to the concept and the powerful significance of the emergence from the 1880s of a socio-biological theory of degeneration 'as a counter-theory to mass democracy and socialism'.<sup>26</sup>

After the turn of the century, war became an extension of internal politics in both powerful and less powerful countries across Europe -- 'like separate theatres upon which the same great tragedy was being played out simultaneously in different languages and with local variations', aggravated by an arms race fed by 'furious nationalism', which made ruling elites 'ever more prone to resort to foreign conflict to further domestic objectives'. The

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<sup>25</sup> In *Mrs Dalloway* Richard Dalloway is identified with protectionist Conservative party interests: 'the public-spirited, British Empire, tariff-reform, governing-class spirit' (p. 84).

<sup>26</sup> Pick 1989, 218.

'cult of war' was an elite, not a plebian affair -- a 'religiously anointed king' still ruled as 'centrepiece' of political societies in which descendants of aristocratic forebears 'filled offices of state, officered the army, devised policies of state'; elite institutions and the Christian church hierarchy dutifully and successfully fulfilled their role in inculcating 'the furor for war in their people', especially among 'their young menfolk' (Mayer, 305-6).

Mayer's conclusion is sweeping and bleak: 'internal conflicts of class, status, and power charged external war with absolute and ideological impulses. Not the logic of modern warfare and alliances but Europe's general crisis fomented this radicalization and universalization of war.' Landed elites were in the vanguard of the conservative resurgence which fuelled these impulses -- 'even in England their enormous social and cultural influence and disproportionate political power continued to be crucial despite their declining economic importance'; in Mayer's analysis, political power was 'the only dyke saving them from being swept away'. The calculations of Europe's ruling and governing classes were indeed cynical: although they did not have 'a closely reasoned understanding of the character of the war they were breeding, they had a general sense of its potential magnitude of scale, purpose and consequence' (306, 301, 314); and the consequences were catastrophic.

It would take two world wars and the Holocaust, or the Thirty Years War of the twentieth century, to finally dislodge and exorcise the feudal and aristocratic presumption from Europe's civil and political societies (329).

Yet Bourdieu's and Nye's analysis of masculinity suggests that Mayer may have underestimated the resilience of 'the feudal and aristocratic presumption'. To some extent dislodged, but not exorcised: for these commentators show -- as Woolf does -- how masculine presumption of the 'gentlemanly' bourgeois kind very much relied on feudal and aristocratic trappings to disguise 'present might with ancient right' (as Moretti puts it). Woolf goes further in her opposition to 'patriarchal ideologies of maternity and militarism' by deliberately conflating domestic tyranny with militaristic fascistic dictatorship in *Three Guineas*. Carlston comments that her public use of the traditionally female (and mostly private) epistolary form and avoidance of assuming a simple correspondence between

gender and ideology challenge both the 'exhortative and monovocal tone of the typical political pamphlet' and the superficiality of the socialist realist genre. The strategy of 'displacing narrative identity' has a more radical effect upon the construction of the *reader* than on the role of the *author*: the 'you' of her interlocutor interpellates an 'entire class of educated men'; the reader is constantly reminded of his/her own class position; some of Moretti's Victorian 'fog' is dispelled by Woolf's 'call for socialist and feminist revolution'.<sup>27</sup>

### **3) The Common Reader: an alternative genealogy of the English novel**

*The Common Reader* (1925) can be read as a meta-commentary upon what Woolf was aiming to achieve in her writing of the mid- to late 1920s.<sup>28</sup> The essays explore historical influences and trends in English fiction (e.g. developments in realism and the emergence of psychological fiction), and trace a genealogy of reading and writing as social practices - Woolf's own alternative historical account of the generic development of the English novel - out of which emerge questions about the role, responsibilities and requirements of contemporary fiction. By what means and with what kinds of emphasis can a writer represent the complexity of changing contemporary reality as she/he perceives it? Equally, how can s/he attempt to describe (represent and account for) the historical conditions which produce those perceptions? The essays are often revealing regarding the indirect narrative strategies through which Woolf chose to render intricate psychological drama against a large canvas of historical change. An example in miniature of this method is 'The Pastons and Chaucer',<sup>29</sup> the first essay in the collection, which gives a vividly imagined glimpse of historical change as it affects a fifteenth-century Norfolk landed family: revealing a complex articulation between material conditions, structures of property and class, shifting gender relations and inter-generational conflict. Young Sir John Paston's alienation, indecision and baffled awareness of change mark the emergence of a new self-conscious individuality in revolt against the older generation's

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<sup>27</sup> Carlston 1998, 7; 139-41.

<sup>28</sup> Monte, 2000.

<sup>29</sup> The essay is a review of *The Paston Letters*, edited by Dr. James Gairdner (1904), 4 vols.

rule of material acquisition: 'He was one of those ambiguous characters who haunt the boundary line where one age merges in another and are not able to inhabit either' (29). In this, he looks forward to the cultural displacement and postwar alienation of Peter Walsh in *Mrs Dalloway*: the returned colonial wanderer whose altered perspective throws a changed London and its changing manners into relief. The theme of unconscious forgetfulness of filial duty to honour the dead also links the essay to the novel.

Woolf's search for a fictional method adequate to the demands of the contemporary historical conjuncture is linked to her frank ambition to carve out her place as a female writer in a masculine literary tradition – at a time when the continuity of meaning and foundations of belief upheld by that tradition had been put in question – fundamentally displaced – by 'the catastrophe of the European war'.<sup>30</sup> She sought to develop a literary/historical/psychological method capable of taking modern fiction into 'the dark places of psychology', an exploration which involved finding new ways of understanding masculinity, and of representing and questioning 'the masculine point of view'.<sup>31</sup> It also meant exploring the underlying nature of those forms of compulsive masculine behaviour which contributed to a crisis whose dimensions included a descent into total war and a steady unraveling of Britain's imperial power.

The overall argument developed in *The Common Reader* represents a new form of historical investigation into reading practices and writing styles in English fiction. Woolf delineates a genealogy which takes as its starting point the neglected perspectives of those who have been largely excluded from the tradition: women; the obscure; and the untutored 'common reader'. Positioning herself on the margins of the tradition, yet at the same time seeking to find her own place in it, Woolf interrogates both herself and her predecessors in a rigorous search for methods of fiction which are adequate to the demands – as she sees them – of the contemporary moment. There is a particular focus in the essays on gender relations in changing times, on inter-generational conflicts and on

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<sup>30</sup> 'On not knowing Greek', *The Common Reader* (43).

<sup>31</sup> 'The Mark on the Wall', 1917.



how women as well as men are represented: these concerns indicate the directions of Woolf's thinking as she prepared the ground for the novels of the mid- to late 1920s. While she sees Defoe, for example, as embedded in his age (*Robinson Crusoe*, like *Stonehenge*, 'resembles one of the anonymous productions of the race rather than the effort of a single mind'), yet she salutes him as a forerunner of Meredith and Ibsen for his advanced views on women's education. She applauds the directness with which Defoe represents the sheer courage required by a lower class woman, such as Moll Flanders, 'to stand her ground', as 'from the outset the burden of proving her right to exist is laid upon her'; while Roxana, arguing 'more subtly against the slavery of marriage', is shown as having 'started a new thing in the world [...] a way of arguing contrary to the general practise.'

Woolf singles out the curious difficulty George Eliot had in portraying men: the 'uncertainty', 'infirmity', 'fumbling' even, 'which shook her hand when she had to conceive a fit male for a heroine'. Eliot's heroines do not find what they seek, but they utter 'a demand for something [...] that is perhaps incompatible with the facts of human existence' (168, 170). Save for the supreme courage of their endeavour, the struggle ends, for her heroines, in tragedy, or in a compromise that is even more melancholy'. In *Mrs Dalloway* Woolf makes creative use of Eliot's dilemma. Clarissa is far from being a conventional heroine: the novel explores reasons why she succumbed to the 'melancholy compromise' of marriage to Richard Dalloway; and her reflections on this choice, induced especially by the death of Septimus, function in the novel's structure of gender relations as a measure for moral judgement of the men of her set and class. Also, very far from being a lower class heroine (as in Defoe), Mrs. Clarissa Dalloway does, surprisingly, display in the end an ability to 'stand her ground' against the corrupting, ensnaring influence of upper class privilege and her husband's fair weather brand of Conservative politics.

*The Common Reader's* explorations of inter-generational and gendered conflicts produced by social change anticipate Woolf's writing practice as it developed in the later

1920s.<sup>32</sup> New models for representing postwar realities were required: models which rendered affect indirectly, 'minutely and aslant' in modernist style, rather than 'directly and largely' in the style of the Greeks.<sup>33</sup> While the Greek dramatists provide the 'original' models for representing human experience – 'the stable, the permanent, the original human being is to be found there' (36). Accustomed as they are 'to look directly and largely rather than minutely and aslant, it was safe for them to step into the thick of emotions which blind and bewilder an age like our own' (43). Therefore, it is to the war poets, Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, that Woolf looks for guidance in directing her gaze towards contemporary war and its consequences.

In the vast catastrophe of the European war our emotions had to be broken up for us, and put at an angle from us, before we could allow ourselves to feel them in poetry or fiction. The only poets who spoke to the purpose spoke in the sidelong, satiric manner of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon. It was not possible for them to be direct without being clumsy; or to speak simply of emotion without being sentimental. But the Greeks could say, as if for the first time, 'Yet being dead they have not died.' They could say, 'If to die nobly is the chief part of excellence, to us out of all men Fortune gave this lot; for hastening to set a crown of freedom on Greece we lie possessed of praise that grows not old.' They could march straight up, with their eyes open; and thus fearlessly approached, emotions stand still and suffer themselves to be looked at ('On not knowing Greek', 43).

At the modern end of the historical sweep made in *The Common Reader* – 'sharply cut off from our predecessors' – Woolf locates herself in 'the consciousness, turbulent and distracted, as it is, of 1919'.<sup>34</sup>

A shift in the scale – the sudden slip of masses held in position for ages – has shaken the fabric from top to bottom, alienated us from the past and made us perhaps too vividly conscious of the present. Every day we find ourselves doing, saying or thinking things that would have been impossible for our fathers. And we feel the differences which have not been noted far more keenly than the resemblances which have been very perfectly expressed.<sup>35</sup>

It is 'the differences which have not been noted' to which Woolf turns in 'Modern Fiction'.

The 'perfectly expressed' resemblances (of the present to the past) appear like fetters on

<sup>32</sup> Mepham (1991, 96) suggests that in *The Common Reader* Woolf was consciously attempting to prepare the ground for *Mrs Dalloway* and her later writing rather than producing a manifesto with explicitly defined objectives and methods worked out, as is argued by some critics.

<sup>33</sup> As Freud also did, Woolf recognised how classical Greek drama could represent human conflict with simple directness while looking steadily at extremes of emotion. While she evidently borrowed from Freud's oedipus complex in *To The Lighthouse*, it was only later that Woolf began to develop an alternative psychological model, also borrowed from the Greeks, in her use of Antigone in *The Years* and *Three Guineas*.

<sup>34</sup> 'Addison' (written in 1919), *The Common Reader* (107).

<sup>35</sup> 'How It Strikes A Contemporary', *The Common Reader* (235).

the needed development of a literary form adequate to convey the turbulence and distraction of the consciousness of 1919: the alienated aftermath of the European War. The 'magnificent apparatus', polished techniques and masculine materialism of her Edwardian predecessors cannot capture 'the thing we seek. Whether we call it life or spirit, truth or reality, this, the essential thing, has moved off, or on, and refuses to be contained any longer in such ill-fitting vestments' (148). Taking the 'materialists' to task in 'Modern Fiction', she uses her methodological critique as a platform to launch her own emerging ideas as to how to render, in modernist style, contemporary reality both in its glory and its catastrophe.

The process of historical research undertaken by Woolf into past practices of reading and writing is also akin to 'archaeology' in Foucault's sense.<sup>36</sup> Woolf's purposes are several: literary, analytical, interpretive. Informed and influentially shaped by admired models from the past, she is also a divergent and rebelliously innovative successor. Sifting through the literary tradition for inspiration, she singles out particular acts of representation by and of women: Margaret Paston's letter writing; Defoe's feisty lower-class women; Austen's ability to convey 'a much deeper emotion than appears on the surface' and stimulate her reader 'to supply what is not there' (144); Eliot's strange inability to represent heroes who are fit for her heroines; the Brontës' use of nature as a symbolic analogue for human emotion.<sup>37</sup> Woolf not only identifies developments in rhetorical method and representation in fiction which are significant stepping-stones in the historical development in the art of writing (which relate correspondingly to development of skills and understanding on the part of readers), but in doing so she also identifies stages of a social evolution and moments of cultural and social change as revealed by significant shifts in gender relations. As a writer and reader, Woolf sees herself as standing in a line of succession of

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<sup>36</sup> See discussion on historicism and Foucault's alternative conception of 'general' history or archaeology, as opposed to 'total' history in Young 1990, 114.

<sup>37</sup> In '*Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*' (157-8) Woolf discusses Emily and Charlotte Brontë's invocation of 'the help of nature' and their 'need of some more powerful symbol of the vast and slumbering passions in human nature'; and in *Mrs Dalloway* she borrows some of the power of this naturalistic symbolism by making the sky into a kind of psychic screen upon which the moods of individuals and of the city collectively are projected. The technique is taken further in *To The Lighthouse*, as discussed in the final section of this chapter.

female forebears (readers, writers, and women as represented in literature both by women and by certain male writers), and finds that this places on her both responsibility and opportunity.<sup>38</sup> Her purposes as historical investigator of reading practices and as writer of fiction are fundamentally shaped by her gender and by her commitment to exploring 'unofficial' historical sources.<sup>39</sup> As Young says of Foucault's notion of archaeology in *The Order of Things*, Foucault was attempting a 'new method of historical enquiry', to break with a historicism that assumes inexorable continuous development and progress, and to 'articulate a repressed history', an attempt at 'a different kind of history, 'genealogy', that demonstrates the emergence of new forms of power'. 'Foucault not merely sets up an alternative history but contends that that alternative is part of a displacement that is in process of replacing the history that preceded it' (111).

#### **4) Mrs Dalloway (1925)**

In *Mrs Dalloway* Woolf dramatises a historical and psychic disjuncture: between the multiple, emerging, uncertain, fragmented perspectives of postwar Londoners, who do not address the recent war directly but who seem rather deliberately or unconsciously to turn away from it; and the fractured perceptions of war and apocalypse of an aspiring and mostly self-educated young man of the lower-middle class, a veteran of the war in France, who found the experience of war to be both extremely educative and – unaccountably -- 'sublime'. Set on a single day in June 1923, *Mrs Dalloway* captures the contradictory mood of postwar London and establishes a mysterious bond of affinity between the society hostess and the shell-shocked war veteran, whose suicide anticipates and resonates with Clarissa's own self-abnegating, suicidal feelings. The portrait of Septimus Smith as victim of the illusory wartime status of 'temporary gentleman' and the account of his shellshocked mental state are at the centre of Woolf's trilogy of war novels, pinpointing

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<sup>38</sup> A process of reflection and realisation which she described in *A Room Of One's Own* as 'thinking back through our mothers'.

<sup>39</sup> As Gillian Beer (and others) point out, Woolf's methods as biographer and historical investigator were conceived in opposition to Victorian hagiography and 'the summary accounting' of her father's biographical methods. 'She liked delicately to bring to the surface mislaid lives, particularly those of women, excluded from historical record'. 'The Victorians in Virginia Woolf' in Beer 1996, 104.

key elements in the crisis of masculinity presaged by the First World War. The restless, interrogative manner of Woolf's approach to these interlinked themes shape the novel's structure. Patriotic, nationalistic images and cultural symbols of war and empire are woven into a backcloth which both reflects and affects the foregrounded human drama. The cityscape of fashionable London in June is the backcloth: the streets and city architecture an ideologically and historically significant topography through which characters move, encounter or unknowingly pass each other by; the weather and sky an index of changing mood, social and psychological; and the war dead are present beneath the city's memorials and paving stones. Traditional masculine ideals of war are silently questioned and undermined by the absent presence of the millions who did not survive; who are perfunctorily memorialised in tawdry public acts of commemoration – 'laid under a pavement of monuments and wreaths' (44) – as postwar London tries to resume business as usual: commerce, consumption, and the social 'season'. It is as if the ghost of Jacob Flanders still haunts the streets traversed by Clarissa as she visits shops, and by Peter Walsh, re-orienting himself in the imperial capital and observing a changing social and gender order, as he makes his way to Clarissa's party.

For all the surface colour and movement of the opening scene, there are persistent discordant notes which hint at a darker mood. These are suggestive of a state which exerts oppressive authority and extracts excessive patriotism and a slavish kind of compliance from its citizens – people who seem to be all too willingly in thrall to the 'voice of authority' and 'the spirit of religion ... abroad' in the wake of the mysterious official car which noses its way through the crowded streets. Minor incidents convey this uneasy atmosphere as rumour mounts about the identity of the high-ranking personage behind the veiled windows of the car.<sup>40</sup> An insult shouted at the 'House of Windsor' – the royal and 'enduring symbol of the state' -- and the ensuing backstreet pub brawl disrupt the breathless moment of public patriotic fervour. Nearby, looking out of the bow-window of a

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<sup>40</sup> Bradshaw suggests that the car's occupant is Sir William Bradshaw, arch proponent of the doctrines of 'Proportion' and 'Conversion', which guide his judgement in the case of Septimus Smith (*MD* 2000, xxiii). The sumptuous car is again seen outside Sir William's consulting rooms in Harley Street at the time of Septimus's appointment with him.

gentlemen's club, a group of '[t]all men, men of robust physique, well-dressed men with their tail-coats and their white slips and their hair raked back' stand 'ready to attend their Sovereign, if need be, to the cannon's mouth' (19-20) – almost, it might seem, like a proto-Fascist gang of uniformly well-dressed thugs. Such hints seem like reminders that this is still a militarized and authoritarian society, subject to propaganda, its citizens still semi-automatically on a war-footing; deep wells of patriotic feeling readily break through 'an agitated surface' and dissent is quickly stifled.

The contrast constructed in the novel between Septimus and an array of more or less 'gentlemanly' male characters, informs a semi-submerged critique of hegemonic English masculinity in a state of transition, if not yet under threat of extinction. Septimus's free fall into mental breakdown provides an alternative commentary on the values and qualities of manliness; his descent into madness and suicide sharpen the satirical bite in Woolf's portraits of the men of the Dalloway set. These latter are all upper middle class types clustered around Dalloway's circle of political allies and rivals – they are variously successful approximations to the criterion of the 'English public school gentleman'. Each is measured in a scale of manly qualities and career success, and in terms of an affective scale indicating capacity to express or repress feeling (the latter being the quality *par excellence* of the criterion: rational restraint). Together these men set up a range of qualities against which the pathos of Septimus's failed attempt to acquire gentlemanly attributes through war service is to be measured. His war experience had been positively educative: in inducting him into manly restraint and the comradeship of trench life (where class difference could be suspended); and emotionally transformative:

one of the first to volunteer [...] he developed manliness; he was promoted; he drew the attention, indeed the affection of his officer, Evans by name.' But [...] when Evans was killed, just before the Armistice, [...] Septimus, far from showing any emotion [...] congratulated himself upon feeling very little and very reasonably. The War had taught him. It was sublime' (94-5).

The bitter irony of his success in war is founded on his subsequent helpless submersion in shellshock: the return of his repressed feelings.

Michael Roper's analysis of veterans' accounts in letters and memoirs of the effects of war trauma on their postwar lives discusses shell shock in relation to debates about the contribution of psychoanalysis to early twentieth century reappraisal of the concept of 'manliness'.<sup>41</sup> Woolf's treatment in *Mrs Dalloway* of the controversial issues of shell shock and suicide by directly representing a war veteran's psychotic state of mind raises similar questions.<sup>42</sup> Septimus's 'madness' and his homoerotic affection for his immediate superior officer opens vertiginous space in the novel for an undercutting commentary on manly stoicism, the lower middle class patriotism which sent him to the front, and the 'blundering' treatment he receives from a corrupt and/or incompetent medical establishment.<sup>43</sup> Roper discusses the emergence of a new, internally focused psychology, shaped by orthodox Freudian psychoanalytic theory, which revealed the utter blindness to internal states and motives of nineteenth century external codes of manly conduct. Such discussion also provides relevant context for an exploration of Woolf's own divergent use of Freudian theory to expose the ruses of masculine behaviour in *To The Lighthouse*.

Roper proposes a transitional state of masculine identity somewhere *between* 'manliness' and 'masculinity' to describe the form of subjectivity that characterises the war generation, one that 'predates "masculinity" as a fully fledged psychological identity'.<sup>44</sup> He argues that the dissemination of Freudian notions of the mind as being composed of both conscious and unconscious elements and the emergence within the Freudian framework of a 'New Psychology' developed in part to deal with immediate medical and military problems

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<sup>41</sup> Roper, M. 2005. 'Between Manliness and Masculinity: The "War Generation" and the Psychology of Fear in Britain, 1914-1950'.

<sup>42</sup> Roper tellingly quotes Showalter's assessment of the powerful impact of shell shock upon the complacency of prewar attitudes: it is nothing less than 'the body language of masculine complaint, a disguised male protest not only against the war but against the concept of 'manliness' itself' (1987, 172).

<sup>43</sup> 'It is very likely Woolf had read reports in the *Times* of the War Office Committee of Enquiry's report on shell shock that had been presented to Parliament [in 1922], ... for the way Septimus is treated by his doctors is typical of the blundering practices of the British medical establishment in the years following the war' (Hussey 1995, 259).

<sup>44</sup> Roper notes R W Connell's identification (2000, 7) of Freud as having constructed 'the first "theory" of masculinity'. 'Within early twentieth century psychoanalysis ... "masculinity" gained a new significance, connoting the complex of competing emotional impulses that together made up masculine subjectivity' (2005, 358).

posed by shell shock fundamentally challenged nineteenth century codes of 'manliness'.<sup>45</sup> However, the emergence of 'modern' concepts of subjectivity was gradual and uneven. Roper's study of subjectivity in war memoirs views masculinity as 'a process in which social scripts are negotiated, one on another, within the self'. He concludes that the 'widespread experience of fear and its aftermath contributed to an attitude of scrutiny towards manliness' which 'sought to transform as much as criticize the stoic ideal', the writers being 'engaged in a process of continuing identification with, as well as distancing from, the social codes of "manliness"' (360-61). In discussing George Mosse's model of manliness as a 'unitary normative standard': 'body and soul, outward appearance and inward virtue' as 'one harmonious whole',<sup>46</sup> Roper comments that it was 'this appearance of singularity', coupled with 'the sense that individual achievement of manliness was a matter of supreme social good, that defined it as a form of "hegemonic masculinity" (346).

The contrast in *Mrs Dalloway* between Septimus's disintegration and the variably passable masculine performances by men of the English establishment (members of the governing, and even of the ruling classes), sets up against the ideal of masculine stoicism a standard for the authenticity of feeling. It further destabilises outward appearances, and structurally links Septimus to Clarissa. Three upper middle class men (Whitbread, Dalloway, Walsh) are shown performing mediocre versions of gentlemanly masculinity in the flurry of activities prior to Clarissa's party and in the party itself. Hugh Whitbread, 'the honourable Hugh', sets a rather ludicrous standard among them as the 'type of the English public school man' (189), 'a perfect specimen of the public school type' (80). In reality he is a paragon of conformity, cypher-like in his lack of rounded characteristics, and despised by Walsh for the obsequious nepotism which secured him 'a little job at Court'. At the upper limit of the scale is the polished cameo portrait of Lord Gayton at Clarissa's party -- exuding aristocratic/chivalric finesse in a blinding mix of horse- and

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<sup>45</sup> In his use of psychoanalytic techniques in the treatment of shellshock, W. H. R. Rivers, as an adherent of the 'New Psychology', adopted Freud's topography of the mind but modified the account of the mechanism of repression (the condition of shell shock stemming 'not from the repression of sexual instincts, but from a clash between the instinct to preserve life and the social and military necessity for duty' (Roper 2005, 347).

<sup>46</sup> Mosse 1996, 5.



swordsmanship, cricketing skill and social savoir-faire; 'with the eyes of a bird, so that no ball could pass him or stroke surprise him. He struck, he leapt, accurately on the spot. Ponies' mouths quivered at the end of his reins'. The ancestral authority behind his posture of aggressive defence is ratified by emblems of status honour and glory in battle, sanctioned by the church and sustained by landholding: 'He had his honours, ancestral monuments, banners hanging in the church at home. He had his duties; his tenants; a mother and sisters; had been all day at Lords' (194).

Against these satirical extremes of parvenu and established upper class performance, Richard Dalloway's good-natured, philanthropic, Tory rectitude appears well-meaning and not unprincipled. However, he is past his prime and overlooked in recent competition for a Cabinet post.<sup>47</sup> The comedy of his buying and presenting flowers to his wife to make up for her exclusion from a lunch invitation, and so that he can tell her that he loves her (which he fails to do), plays on his inability to express his feelings. Meanwhile the examples of poverty and social degradation that he observes in the streets excite his sympathy and philanthropic principles, and remind him of his declared political mission (no less inauthentic than his feeling for his wife?). His comic failure and helpless adhesion to gender stereotype matches Clarissa's inability to distinguish between Armenians and Albanians.<sup>48</sup> His susceptibility to a modicum of feeling (philanthropy and sentimental abjection before his wife) satirically contrasts him with Septimus, the promoted 'temporary gentleman' whose excess of repressed feeling has disastrously returned to finish him off. Dalloway's partial, complacent (but felt) acknowledgement of the price in war dead that has been paid for his own comfort and survival (and that of his class) also structurally links him to Septimus. 'Really it was a miracle thinking of the war, and thousands of poor chaps, with all their lives before them, shoveled together, already half forgotten; it was a miracle' (126). In his somewhat befuddled and expansive mood after Lady Bruton's

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<sup>47</sup> Given the weakness of Baldwin's new Conservative administration in 1923, 'back in power after sharing it with the Liberals during the war, and now threatened with the rise of Labour, Dalloway's failure to win promotion indicate 'a failure of some magnitude', despite other indications of his inside political connections (Tate 1998, 162). The promise and ambition shown by the younger Richard Dalloway in *The Voyage Out* are not realised in this older version.

<sup>48</sup> Tate 1998, 155-9.

luncheon party, his conflation of this 'miracle' of national survival with the still surprising 'miracle' of his being married to Clarissa detracts somewhat from the integrity of his judgement, and exposes the gulf of complacency and class privilege that separates him from Septimus.

While Dalloway is mainly portrayed from the outside through Walsh's half-mocking, half-jealous reminiscence and Clarissa's grateful but ambivalent affection, Peter Walsh's semi-alienated consciousness is rendered almost entirely through the flexibility of free indirect discourse, occasionally cut and interlaced with that of Clarissa.<sup>49</sup> An 'unsound' gentleman, 'a little cranky', who in life 'had done just respectably' (just enough not to be disreputable), Walsh plays a contrasting role among these masculine types by indicating the boundaries of a manliness that is modified by being more acceptable to women – or at least to his former lover, Clarissa. (Such manliness is defined especially in terms of susceptibility to feelings which might be deemed 'unmanly', but also in terms of how masculine authority is deployed and 'respect' demanded.) Walsh's apparent contentment and 'look of having reserves [...] made him attractive to women, who liked the sense that he was not altogether manly. [...] He was a man. But not the sort of man one had to respect' (171). Coming from 'a respectable Anglo-Indian family', he yet grew up with a dislike of Empire and the army. In his own estimation, his lack of success in India and elsewhere is mainly due to a bookish susceptibility to feeling: 'One might weep if no one saw. It had been his undoing – this susceptibility – in Anglo-Indian society; not weeping at the right time, or laughing either' (166). This susceptibility links Walsh to Septimus in several ways: conveyed through a shared ambivalence about the manly values which cause both Walsh's alienation and the impasse of Septimus's homoerotic feelings for his officer-friend; and through the coincidental intersections of plot, peregrination and

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<sup>49</sup> Bradshaw comments that Woolf's use of free indirect discourse in this novel allows her to 'fuse a number of discrete narrative perspectives' of otherwise unconnected or disconnected characters in the cityscape on a single day (*MD* 2000, xli-ii). Walsh's role as narrator/commentator on the changing mood and social scene of London in party mood towards the end of the novel looks forward to Bernard's soliloquy which takes over the narration in the final part of *The Waves*.

narrative which structurally unite them in the course of the novel.<sup>50</sup> The final coincidence is the sound of the bell of the ambulance which (unknown to Walsh) conveys Septimus's mutilated body from the scene of his death. The bell sets off in Walsh's mind a train of association between the triumphs of civilization and the ambulance's mission of mercy -- which induces him to weep (unknowingly in honour and remembrance of the un-mourned Septimus Smith).

The shadow of Septimus's fate falls on and touches the lives of those who have direct contact with him as well as those who tangentially encounter or observe him by chance from different viewpoints in the course of the novel.<sup>51</sup> In her agony, his wife Rezia appears almost as if only arbitrarily connected to him (their marriage an impulsive accident of war); however, the strength of their original affection is also indicated, accentuating the disorientation both feel as he descends into psychosis. This mutual affection perhaps affirms his masculinity, as being capable of attracting loyalty and love from women as well as from comrades in arms. Symbolically, Septimus represents the uncounted war dead and the (deliberately unnoticed) psychologically wounded. Before finally being subsumed within the stigma of madness, for one moment he looks at this fate from the outside: 'once a maimed file of lunatics being exercised or displayed for the diversion of the populace (who laughed aloud), ambled and nodded and grinned past him, in the Tottenham Court Road, each half apologetically, yet triumphantly, inflicting his hopeless woe. And would *he* go mad?' (98). The presence on the streets of the maimed and lunatic (not specifically identified here as war wounded victims of shellshock), the cruel sport they provide, and Septimus's own fear of being engulfed in the nightmare, are testimony to postwar London's unwillingness to acknowledge the price paid for the 'miracle' of peace. While the after-effects of shellshock are discussed in parliamentary committee by the likes of Richard Dalloway and Sir William Bradshaw, Septimus's

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<sup>50</sup> Septimus 'sees' Walsh as Evans as he walks past him in Regents Park (59).

<sup>51</sup> Beer suggests that all the characters -- and the reader -- of the novel are united through the 'immediate trauma [...] of the First World War, which for Virginia Woolf is also the deep historical separator [...]. Septimus Smith endlessly and nihilistically recalls his lost experience of the war. But as we read, that experience is not confined to Septimus alone; it spreads *through our reading* into the whole community described. The reader becomes the medium of connection' (1996, 53).

condition is diagnosed as 'funk' by Holmes, and is to be contained, disguised and shut away by Bradshaw's methods. Uncomfortable questions about madness and manliness are seemingly evaded/resolved by Septimus's suicide; but other large questions are also raised. As Freud noted, modern 'civilised' society had lost an ethical law and customary process whereby the violence perpetrated on and by the returning soldier could be atoned for, and his psychological trauma salved, before he rejoined civilian life.<sup>52</sup>

Thus Bradshaw's judgement on Septimus, on the un-manned nature of his shell-shocked psychological condition, is intelligible as an act of moral cowardice or at least of cynical managerialism, aiming to bolster threatened male authority and shore up the position of belligerence taken as the right basis of masculine domination. In *Three Guineas* Woolf confronts these issues directly in her discussion of the fundamental impulse – 'men's fighting instinct' – which underlies his propensity to go to war. The honourable glories of war and the qualities which sustain them – 'war is a profession; a source of happiness and excitement; [...] an outlet for manly qualities, without which men would deteriorate' (TG 121) – are refracted through the memoirs of Francis and Riversdale Grenfell (who served in the First World War), in John Buchan's biography of them, and in memorialising biographies such as that of Viscount Knebworth by the Earl of Lytton (TG endnotes 4, 5, p. 275). Woolf's portrait of the representative mental casualty of the war, Septimus Smith, shows him as having been seduced by the heroic masculine qualities and manly comradeship offered by war – the experience was 'sublime'. However, unlike the upper class Grenfell brothers, Septimus comes from a petit bourgeois background, has acquired culture piecemeal, is 'half-educated, self-educated' (MD 91) through adult education night classes, and feels deeply honoured and flattered by loyal friendship or love offered by an officer. His mental breakdown is magnified in intensity and destructive consequence due to his déclassé vulnerability, for even the frail protections of class belonging or privilege are in his case lacking.

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<sup>52</sup> *Thoughts on War and Death* (21).

### 5) To The Lighthouse

As Peter Walsh makes his way towards Clarissa's party through a changing London (the evening sky alight with storms), he is astonished, moved, interested -- above all encouraged -- both by the beauty of the city and by examples of continuity and change in social life glimpsed on the streets, in open windows, emerging through doorways: 'with his hands behind his back and his eyes still a little hawk-like; he tripped through London, towards Westminster, observing' (139). Passing through 'the symmetry of a corridor': 'Bedford Place leading into Russell Square', he sees evidence of evolving life on either side of the street, and then in the square, within swerving traffic, he passes timidly, discreetly by the 'sacred ceremony' of 'loitering couples, dallying, embracing' under the trees. This feature of city architecture (two squares linked by a straight street) and the sample of life to be observed in it, anticipates the thematic form of Woolf's next novel. She drew a diagram ('two blocks joined by a corridor') in a note book of the shape which structures and informs *To The Lighthouse*.<sup>53</sup> Mepham (1991, 100) suggests that this powerful figure holds together many of the novel's main themes: 'the relation between husband and wife, the tunnel which connects the present moment with powerful scenes from the past, the relationship of a child with its mother in being born into a separate space'. It also connotes the birth of a work of art (Lily Briscoe's painting); Lily's 'demons' of doubt as she works, 'made this passage from conception to work as dreadful as any down a dark passage for a child' (*TTL* 23). The 'corridor' also figures the passage of time in the central 'Time Passes' section of the novel, dividing the first section 'The Window' from the third 'The Lighthouse'. 'Time Passes', parenthetically in 'eyeless', poetic narration, encompasses the key events of the ten-year period separating the day of family life in the first section from the day of utterly changed family life in the concluding section. In this 'tunnel' of time occur life- and world-changing events which alter the family dynamic (as enacted in 'The Window') to produce in the sequel ('The Lighthouse') a radically

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<sup>53</sup> Mepham (1991, 100) with reference to the detailed 'history of the conception and revisions of *To The Lighthouse* in Susan Dick's (Hogarth, 1983) edition of the holograph drafts of the novel'.

reconfigured dynamic in the aftermath of the First World War, following the deaths -- among countless others -- of mother, eldest son and daughter.

While Septimus Smith's achievement of a wartime manly ideal was tragically brief, rapidly disintegrating in the war's aftermath as stoicism gives way under the weight of repressed feeling, Mr Ramsay's sense of worth and superior masculine selfhood are also revealed as inseparable from an underlying feeling of fragility and vulnerability. Rather than being securely founded upon his achieved academic reputation as an eminent philosopher his need 'to be assured of his genius' and to be 'taken into the circle of life' by his wife appears as a kind of victimhood in which he is dependent upon the magnified self-image that only subservient women can confer upon him. As Nye and Bourdieu emphasise, the fragility of male authority -- and hence 'status honour' -- is due to the inflexibility of the ideological construct of separate spheres which both warrants and exposes the limits of assumed masculine predominance. Mr Ramsay's infantile dependency upon mother/wife (and subordinated women in general) is revealed in 'The Window' and re-lived in 'The Lighthouse' through James's and Cam's re-assessment of the reflex mechanisms which produce their father's insistently assertive egotistical behaviour. In the primal scene at the window, where the father's need for succour and reassurance is most nakedly revealed (through the watching implicated eyes of James), his effort to preserve/reinstate self-image takes the laughable (and infantile) form of attempting to disguise his emotional need in a fantasy of heroic action and conceal his professional self-doubt in an anachronistic code of military honour and self-sacrifice. The comedy of his efforts to embody himself in the reconstructive nostalgia of Tennyson's *The Charge of the Light Brigade* is brilliantly conveyed -- which perhaps softens the initial satirical impact of this broadside against masculine vanity but allows its resonance to deepen. In dramatizing the splits between Mr Ramsay's inner world, his outward behaviour and his aspirations, Woolf's technique is to reveal the blind-spot of his dependency and expose the fatal discrepancies in his behaviour to others (here, his wife, Lily Briscoe and Mr Banks). His internal conflict, revealed to critical external gaze as a shortfall in manliness, is acted out

in his unbecoming need for praise and bizarre self-dramatization as a stricken military hero. His inability to hold together 'outward appearance and inward virtue' as 'one harmonious whole' is magnified rather than concealed by his transparently inappropriate recourse to a manly code of behaviour, valuing action over thought and external composure over feeling, which was already proved disastrously obsolete by mid-nineteenth century at Balaklava. Trying to displace his sense of failure in a changing world, a ludicrous over-identification with an aristocratic military caste whose destiny is to be celebrated for its capacity 'not to reason why', also draws attention to the newly apparent anachronism of his masculinist claims to authoritative philosophical wisdom.<sup>54</sup> Roper notes Tosh's designation of imperial manliness as an 'external code of conduct', and the association of "manliness" in all its forms' with 'an attitude of forgetfulness of self in favour of action in the world'.<sup>55</sup> Indeed Roper suggests that the emerging 'concept of "masculinity" loosely associated with Freudian thought did just the opposite; it was associated with an attitude of soliciting awareness of internal states and motives' (348). In the last section of 'The Lighthouse' the internally fought contest of James's childhood staged as adolescent oedipal struggle with his father is articulated in psychoanalytical terms: the jealous discord between them is resolved through James's capacity self-reflectively to distinguish between the person of his father and the obsessive character of his needs; simultaneously his father is released to spring, 'lightly like a young man, holding his parcel, on to the rock' of the lighthouse (236).

In each of the novel's three sections the narrative standpoint shifts: from the 'multipersonal representation of consciousness' (as identified by Auerbach) in 'The

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<sup>54</sup> Tate (2003, 160-1) notes that Mr Ramsay misquotes one line of Tennyson's poem: 'Boldly we rode and well/into the jaws of Death' instead of "Boldly *they* rode ..."; and she points to the discrepancy of 'a middle-aged philosopher' imagining himself 'in the cavalry of fifty years earlier, riding with a group of aristocrats ... men who are praised ... for their ability to act rather than to think or speak'.

<sup>55</sup> Tosh (2005, 338) indicates how an intensified discourse of sexual difference in the late nineteenth century in reaction against advances in women's education, political rights and growing independence tended to deny 'men's emotional vulnerability and reinforce their monopoly on courage and stoicism'.

Window'; through the impersonal narration of the central section 'Time Passes',<sup>56</sup> and a return to a multipersonal form of narration in the third section 'The Lighthouse' – but with the difference that here the authorial narrative standpoint is included within the landscape of the sublunary world, itself held in view through the artist's eye of Lily Briscoe painting her canvas. As narrative viewpoint shifts in this final section between alternate perspectives (that of the occupants of the boat in the bay, and the commanding perspective over the whole landscape of Lily completing her painting), the process of writing and reading is reflected in that of framing a painterly perspective.<sup>57</sup> In some respects the perspectival shifts in the last section of the novel echo, in a more complex form, the shifting perspectives of Peter Walsh's observing perambulation in *Mrs Dalloway*. However, rather than being the transitory, fleeting viewpoint of the urban flâneur, Lily Briscoe's observing eye is that of the novelist/painter of a psychologically significant landscape, who adjusts perspectives, probes beneath surface appearances, and creates the representational effects of balance and vision across the whole scene.

In 'Time Passes' surface manifestations of violent conflict appear momentarily: 'the silent apparition of an ashen-coloured ship spectral ship ... come, gone; ... a purplish stain upon the bland surface of the sea as if something had boiled and bled, invisibly beneath' (152).<sup>58</sup> In *To The Lighthouse* there is marked gender difference in characters' apprehension of mysteries hidden beneath the sea's surface. Mrs Ramsay and her daughter Cam both, in the manner of the fishing metaphor, allow their minds to sink into the depths, Cam sitting in the boat trailing her hand in the cold water, Mrs Ramsay sitting with a book or knitting on her lap, her mind sunk in reverie.<sup>59</sup> By contrast, Mr Ramsay's restless mind, voracious in its masculine impulse for discovery and exploration, avidly

<sup>56</sup> 'The most impersonal, abstract piece of writing she ever attempted', relating 'the flight of inhuman time and nature's complete indifference to all things human' (Mepham 1991, 109).

<sup>57</sup> 'Significant form', as in Roger Fry's modernist conception of painterly representation, is thus revealed. Bradshaw (*TTL* 2006, xlii) discusses the formalist qualities of Lily's painting.

<sup>58</sup> cf Conrad's guilt-laden story of war at sea, 'The Tale' (1925), in which oblique evidence of a hidden enemy's presence is given by a piece of floating wreckage, in Tate, ed, 1995, 210-24.

<sup>59</sup> Identification of the Freudian unconscious as a dark and dangerous underwater zone of de-inhibited confrontation is also evident elsewhere in Woolf's writing in this period, as in the extended metaphor in 'Professions for Women' (1931) of the woman writer fishing and allowing her unconscious mind to roam freely.



elicits details as the fisherman tells of winter storms and shipwrecks. Sailing across the bay through this zone of hidden conflict, the boat is the vessel wherein James's and Cam's oedipal conflicts with their father are played out, contained, perhaps even resolved. At the same time the boat in the bay is the focal point of Lily's generalising representation of the struggle in a larger psychological landscape. Lily's thought as shaping artist stands in for authorial comments on the perspectival shifts: 'Distance had an extraordinary power; they had been swallowed up in it, she felt, they were gone for ever, they had become part of the nature of things' (213). As Lily struggles to hold both past and present in her mind and to convey significant form in her painting, the boat is conveyed further away from her: 'So much depends, she thought, upon distance: whether people are near us or far from us; for her feeling for Mr Ramsay changed as he sailed further and further across the bay' (217).

What was the problem then? She must try to get hold of something that evaded her. ... [W]hat she wished to get hold of was that very jar on the nerves, the thing itself before it has been made anything. ... It was a miserable machine, an inefficient machine, she thought, the human apparatus for painting or for feeling; it always broke down at the critical moment (219-20).

Although the outcomes of oedipal struggles and succession are left enigmatically open, postwar conditions in the final part of the novel combine to create a male crisis on the home front. The death of Andrew Ramsay puts in question both patrilineal 'stud book' succession<sup>60</sup> and the intellectual inheritance of Mr Ramsay's idealist philosophy. The survival of a patriarchal gender order represented by the philosopher's egotism (albeit tempered by his literary values) is at issue in the 'battle of strong equals'<sup>61</sup> – the oedipal struggle of the (not yet tested) son and his father. The death of Mrs Ramsay, to which it might seem her husband's ruthless dependency has contributed, irrevocably alters the gender order/dynamic within the family. The death of Prue Ramsay 'in some illness connected with childbirth' puts in question the matrilineal succession through marriage and childrearing promoted by her mother. The morning after her return to the restored postwar house, Lily, Mrs Ramsay's protégée, cannot reproduce, or even recall, the

<sup>60</sup> Gilbert and Gubar 1994, vol 3, 13.

<sup>61</sup> Gilbert and Gubar 1994, vol 1, 195.

requisite gestures for salving Mr Ramsay's wounded self (though she saves the situation by praising his boots). Cam, the youngest daughter, joined in compact with James against their father's tyranny, veers between resistance and surrender to paternal blandishments, caught as she is between combatants in the masculine generational struggle on the boat. His father's authority is already vested in James as helmsman of the boat; in Cam's eyes her brother is already 'the lawgiver', for 'his hand upon the tiller had become symbolical to her'.<sup>62</sup> 'And to which did she yield, she thought, sitting between them. ... For she thought ... looking at James ..., you're not exposed to it, to this pressure and division of feeling, this extraordinary temptation'. But the 'division of feeling' engendered in the oedipal triangle, and the temptation to submit, are countered by Cam's capacity for self-reflection and cool-headed analysis of her father's aberrant behaviour (her reflective capacities are similar to James's newfound powers of self-analysis). Despite her father's attractions: his hands, feet, voice, words, haste, temper, oddity, passion, remoteness;

what remained intolerable ... was that crass blindness and tyranny of his which had poisoned her childhood and raised bitter storms, so that even now she woke in the night trembling with rage and remembered some command of his; some insolence: 'Do this', 'Do that', his dominance: his 'Submit to me' (191-3).

Both Lily and Cam (like Elizabeth Dalloway under the divergent tutelage of Miss Kilman), display promise as female successors, capable of replacing absent or wayward brothers unable or unwilling to fulfil destiny in a patrilineal order. They can be seen as representing the possibility of a differently configured gender order for the postwar generation.<sup>63</sup>

These possibilities have been adumbrated in the agitation of the novel's opening section. After the primal oedipal scene in 'The Window' Mrs Ramsay ruminates on her own discomposure at the public way in which her husband's dependency upon her is revealed, and at feeling herself 'impeded in her proper function by these lies, these exaggerations'

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<sup>62</sup> This 'rite of institution' of the son (to use Bourdieu's terminology) is reinforced at cost to the daughter (the father's ridiculing of Cam's inability to steer, to tell North from South, and her not knowing the points of the compass) (190-1).

<sup>63</sup> However, the threat of a new fascist masculine hegemony is never entirely absent in Woolf's later novels, and is very present in *Three Guineas*.

(in response to his need for sympathy and reassurance). Discomposed by departures from the codes of manly restraint and separate spheres, Mrs Ramsay: 'did not like, even for a second, to feel finer than her husband; and further, could not bear not being entirely sure, when she spoke to him, of the truth of what she said' (46-7). The younger generation, Mrs Ramsay's educated daughters, by contrast, because of youth and the presence in the air of new ways of thinking, are free to 'sport with infidel ideas of a life different from hers':

not always taking care of some man or other; for there was in all their minds a mute questioning of deference and chivalry, of the Bank of England and the Indian Empire, of ringed fingers and lace, though to them all there was something in this of the essence of beauty, which called out the manliness in their hearts, and made them, as they sat at a table beneath their mother's eyes, honour her strange severity, her extreme courtesy, like a Queen's raising from the mud a beggar's dirty foot and washing ... (9).

Such is Woolf's view of 'the hypnotic power of domination' – curbing young female rebellion with ambivalence and mystifying respect for their mother's angelic, Christ-like, Queen-like, self-abnegation. Significantly, in these new conditions of generational change, 'infidel ideas' are not confined to rebellious daughters but are shared by the educated man's youngest son. At the core of the conflict between Mr Ramsay and James, is the presence 'already' in James's six-year-old mind of a 'private code' and 'secret language' for interpreting natural phenomena. This distinguishes him from the rationalism of his eldest brother Andrew, his father's intellectual heir. It was Andrew who had enlightened Lily Briscoe about 'what his father's books were about: "Subject and object and the nature of reality" ... "Think of a kitchen table ... when you're not there" ' (27-8); Lily afterwards duly always does see a large table, perhaps lodged in a tree, whenever 'she thought of his work'. However, after Andrew is killed in action in France – when he is 'not there' – it is James who is looked to by his father as successor.

The two voyages to the lighthouse (the first debated; the second carried out) isolate the conflict between father and son within two triangular oedipal circuits of exchange: a primal triangle of father-mother-son; and another negotiation between father-daughter-son which looks towards the future. As Spivak suggests, Mrs Ramsay's sexuality is 'the stage for

action between son and husband' (1988, 121). Woolf stages James's psychic *rite de passage* into manly independence -- at the helm, but shadowed and constrained by his father -- as a psychoanalytically informed record of the process of construction of gender identity.<sup>64</sup> On the first page of the novel James is already mentally reaching for a weapon with which to wreak vengeance upon his father for his intrusion upon his intimate communion with his mother. Ten years later, in a state of reverie in the becalmed boat, James is visited again by the same murderous feelings ('He had always kept this old symbol of taking a knife and striking his father to the heart') (209). Observing his father reading in the middle of the boat, his patricidal rage interprets the old man's every gesture -- even as he turns the pages of his book -- as replicating that same threefold pattern of behaviour (assertion, command, demand for sympathy) which underlies his technique of marital and family domination: 'James felt that each page was turned with a peculiar gesture aimed at him: now assertively, now commandingly; now with the intention of making people pity him' (208). 'A rope seemed to bind him there, and his father had knotted it and he could only escape by taking a knife and plunging it .....

(213). Yet in his advancing young man's wisdom he is capable of distinguishing the old man's compulsions from his more balanced self. James finds he can take a distance, moderate his own impulse, and externalise his father's aggressive need to dominate. His capacity for self-reflection allows him to visualise his father's punishing, bullying impulse as a malign but external visitant -- 'it was not him, that old man reading, whom he wanted to kill, but it was the thing that descended on him -- without his knowing it perhaps: that fierce sudden black-winged harpy [...] that struck and struck at you [...] and then made off, and there he was again, an old man, very sad, reading his book'. Searching his mind and earliest recollections for the origin of this almost overpowering patricidal urge, James's self-analysis leads him to see his father's acts of oedipal aggression as an impersonal external force, like the wheel of a cart which crushes a bare, vulnerable, innocent foot. He notes processes at work which pit son and father in a struggle over psychic inheritance -- not

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<sup>64</sup> cf Bowlby (1997, 135): the novel 'explores both the insistence and untenability of prevailing constructions of masculine and feminine identities' in that 'men and women have to take up their parts' in relation to the '(masculine) fantasies' of 'the conquering hero and the angel of the house'.

only how, as victim, he can evade and resist his father, but also whether as son he is destined to reproduce the archaic patterns of domination. Projected in his mind 'was a waste of snow and rock very lonely and austere; and there [...] were two pairs of footprints only; his own and his father's. They alone knew each other. What then was this terror, this hatred?' (210). His father is like a watchdog whom he creeps past on the mental route back to the memory of his mother ('She alone spoke the truth; to her alone could he speak it'), and 'he was conscious of his father following his thought, shadowing it, making it shiver and falter'.

The resolution of the conflict exemplified by James and the question of succession is ambiguous. Taking his own social privilege for granted, he resolves in future life to fight, track down and stamp out tyranny and despotism wherever he finds it – 'whether he was in a business, in a bank, a barrister, a man at the head of some enterprise'. James rather dutifully imagines an actual professional career at a level where power and influence are exercised.<sup>65</sup> More convincing perhaps is his realisation, when the boat brings him close to the symbolic destination, that his desire to see the lighthouse in close-up needs to be balanced by the distanced perspective from afar when it is 'sometimes hardly to be seen across the bay'. Woolf here suggests that the son may only resolve the question of how to break the cycle of dominance by simultaneously taking both inside and outside perspectives upon the generic dilemma which forms him as a man. Indeed the third part of the novel is structured as a simultaneity of both perspectives, placing the boat in a land/seascape and noting the displacement it makes within a historical universe of ideas. In her next novel, *The Waves* (already germinating in her mind as she finishes *To The Lighthouse*), Woolf again creates a radically innovative structure through which these patterns of domination, and the formative processes which produce them, may be examined with simultaneity and a certain objectivity, both from afar and close to (as if through the very speech and thought patterns of a group of representative actors).

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<sup>65</sup> In the first scene Mrs Ramsay imagines her youngest son in adulthood exercising authority as a judge.

This chapter has examined two novels of Woolf's 'war trilogy', wherein, during the interwar period of the 1920s, she prepared the way (in terms of narrative method and authorial perspective upon a world undergoing tumultuous historical change) for her research and writing project of the 1930s. Intricate interconnections between world events and individual consciousness are explored in different ways in these two novels. Londoners in *Mrs Dalloway* respond individually and arbitrarily to past and present events, as Woolf constructs a kaleidoscopic impression of an emerging contemporary consciousness which rejects the official lies of wartime propaganda and overflows the narrow confines of patriotic nationalism. Septimus as sacrificial victim pays homage to the lost hopes of the war dead, and buys the survivors a new lease of life and hope. The Ramsay family in *To the Lighthouse* come to terms with loss and change in a vast land- and seascape which reflects their psychic struggles. A new 'manliness' in the daughters, which transgresses the boundaries of gender roles set by their parents, is already evident in the prewar episode. In the postwar sequel, James, the surviving male successor, demonstrates his capacity to operate by a different philosophical code from that of his father. Navigating the boat to his father's final destination, he shows some promise of finding his own way in a post-imperial world.

Woolf's writing project of the next decade, which was to occupy her for the rest of her life, continued to explore the causes and malign effects of masculine, imperial domination in political and cultural life in England, Europe and across the global reach of the British Empire, and perforce became increasingly concerned with the Spanish Civil War and the spread of Fascism across Europe. As the interwar period reverted to military conflict, Woolf accordingly renewed her own literary efforts to resist fascistic, dictatorial and masculinist tendencies in literary and cultural production in order to develop a literary and political style of writing capable of looking directly at, but with a strategic distance from, this danger. Her models are again the Greeks (in this case Antigone). 'They could march straight up, with their eyes open; and thus fearlessly approached, emotions stand still and suffer themselves to be looked at' ('On not knowing Greek', 43).

## CHAPTER 7

### Conclusion

#### 1) Introduction

The discussion of masculinity and war in the last chapter is continued here through an examination of the precarious moment between peace and war (the 'future shadow[ing] [the] present'), caught in *Between the Acts*, Woolf's last novel.<sup>1</sup> Set in June 1939, the novel was published in the spring of 1941, not long after Virginia Woolf had taken her own life. This chapter thus completes the circle described in previous chapters of looking back from Woolf's late work so as to trace forwards her evolving methods for bringing men into critical perspective. The chapter also returns, in its second section, to the discussion, broached in Chapter Two in relation to the stormy reception history of *Three Guineas*, of the continuing evolution of Woolf's intellectual reputation. As scholarship contributes to better understanding of Woolf's stylistic methods, her political thinking and the breadth and variety of her literary, journalistic and pedagogical work, it is timely to review recent discussion of Woolf's role as public intellectual in light of the present study. This study traces the development in her novels and essays of a detached, autoethnographical narrative stance: that of a female outsider as critical commentator on the public world of men. The stance is both rhetorical and political, and necessarily public, but has been very differently understood and interpreted over many decades of commentary. This concluding chapter connects the representation of masculinity in Woolf's last novel with her critique of patriarchy, Fascism and war in *Three Guineas*, a text which Jane Marcus (2006, xxxv) hails as Woolf's final intervention as a public intellectual. The chapter concludes with some consideration of potential implications of this study for future work in Woolf Studies in relation to her autoethnographic consideration and textualization of masculinity.

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<sup>1</sup> Kermode suggests that prewar summer 'might be taken as a true moment of crisis: Barcelona had fallen to Franco, Austria and Czechoslovakia had been swallowed by the future enemy, and Poland was under immediate and fatal threat'. The novel 'was being written during the Dunkirk evacuation of May 1940, the Battle of Britain that followed in the autumn, and ... the London blitz of the winter of 1940'. *BA* 1992, Introduction, xiv.

The first section locates *Between the Acts* within its discursive context: a culminating text arising out of Woolf's research and writing project of the 1930s, and as a text which takes her development of the autoethnographic mode to a final stage. The analysis of *Three Guineas* linking domestic and global dictatorship and the rise of Fascist militarism, and the construction of masculinity as an unstable and historically changing entity (as represented in *The Years* and other novels), are evident in Woolf's last novel, but the mood of this new fictional departure is very different. The chapter draws on two aspects of Esty's reading (2004) of *Between the Acts*: his view of the pageant as a communal, amateur, parochial, theatrical form enjoying a surge of Edwardian popularity and expressing a new political mood in 1940s 'post-imperial' England; and his suggestion that a new autoethnographic discourse emerged in some modernist writing in this period.<sup>2</sup>

While Esty's reading is enlightening, this chapter takes a different tack in arguing that Woolf's final novel continues and takes further the exploration of issues she had addressed in *Three Guineas*: i.e. the causes, effects and psychology of the aggressive, specifically masculine mentality which manifests itself in jingoistic nationalism unthinkingly promoting war as if an inevitable outcome of 'men's fighting instinct'. As Gillian Beer puts it, violence is at the centre of meaning in the novel (1996, 136). While the background mood of *Between the Acts* remains sombre and threatening, the foreground is full of colourful, detailed parodic comedy. The pageant, with its elaborate business of the production of representation, is a vehicle for a searching examination of popular imagining and consciousness in an ancient English pastoral setting – caught in a moment of impending war and in the uncertainty of palpably shifting popular consciousness.

The early twentieth century 'anthropological turn', when the imperial gaze was turned inward, marks for Esty the onset of a new 'post-imperial' consciousness within the heartlands of the metropolitan centre, made manifest in new cultural forms or in

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<sup>2</sup> Esty, J. 2004. *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England*.



reinvention of the old. In *Between the Acts* and texts such as Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1923) and Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924), are to be discerned the beginnings of a discursive process whereby English intellectuals 'translated the end of Empire into a resurgent concept of national culture ... one whose insular integrity seemed to mitigate some of modernism's characteristic social agonies while rendering obsolete some of modernism's defining aesthetic techniques' (2). "Demetropolitanisation' in the 1930s and 1940s, a certain 'generational fatigue' around 1940 among Anglophone modernists, together with 'a spike in the 1930s in autoethnographic discourses projecting England *qua* nation as newly representable in the holistic terms of anthropology' are, for Esty, all key components of 'a mid-century reinvention of English culture' (10). Esty's thesis, looking across late texts of key English modernists (Woolf, Eliot, Forster) at a critical moment in European history (a moment which in England, Esty suggests, presages the later emergence of Cultural Studies), is internally consistent and cogent. However, when *Between the Acts* is considered in relation to Woolf's autoethnographical analysis of masculinity as developed in her work as a whole, as this chapter seeks to do, its mood and pacifist concerns seem closer to those of *Three Guineas*, and its use of autoethnographic techniques and perspective seem more readily explicable as a continuing and consistent development of Woolf's fictional strategies, than as an example of a general tendency within late English modernism as a whole.

The second section of the chapter undertakes a review of changing perspectives on Woolf as a public intellectual, while the discussion of *Between the Acts* also aims to make connections with that continuing reassessment of Woolf's intellectual legacy.

## **2) *Between the Acts* (1941)**

Esty argues that Woolf's representation of the pageant in *Between the Acts* strategically departs from the form and content of the highly popular Edwardian pageant play, which typically presented 'rote patriotism, recycled literary materials and clumsy theatrical

amateurism' – a degraded form of 'history popularized as amnesia in fancy dress' (61). Woolf's revisionary subversion of this popular genre opens a number of dimensions of opportunity, ambivalence and critique. It provides opportunity to develop in new directions issues addressed in *Three Guineas*, in parodying the public ritual performance by statesmen, churchmen, academics and opinion formers in their civic pageantry of institutional power and patriotic symbolism. Here the satiric inflection is different in that the focus is upon the thinking and feelings of common people (not the elite), but the point at issue has the same questioning focus upon how and why people hold to persistent attitudes about English history and patriotic Englishness. As Beer and Esty both comment, Woolf's own attitude to the 'community' which is invoked in *Between the Acts* is characteristically ambivalent. This community, which expresses itself collectively through the choric elements of the performance and the running commentary of thoughts, feelings in the minds and verbal exchanges of the audience, is characterised both as a repository of lasting, positive values ('peaceful, insular continuities' (Esty 2004, 96)) and as a backward-looking, unthinking, reactionary collectivity whose attitudes amount to a 'public opinion' which sanctions war and aggressive nationalist expansionism. This mindset is the same manipulated public consciousness which Woolf attacks in *Three Guineas*. Yet, as Esty suggests, while the presentation of the business and reception of the pageant is absurd, it is 'not fully ironic' – in that Woolf retains and celebrates a certain 'cohesive power' still possessed by the community (91). Thus in *Between the Acts*, the pageant rehearses 'an unofficial version of national discourse' (90), as the epistolary *Three Guineas* also does.

Beer emphasises the contrast between the novel's 'formal severity' (in maintaining the classical unities of time, theme and place) and 'the plethora of events and language in the sprawling, yet stylised pageant' whose 'static drama' also contrasts with the 'inward dynamic drama of the audience's thoughts and feelings' (417). Choric repetition implies 'communal survival' – 'you are still there' even if only to repeat the same things (400). Yet the community's values have brought the country to the brink of war. Beer sees the

influence of Woolf's reading of Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* in the allusions to prehistoric aggressors persisting in the present. As in *Three Guineas*, war and the rise of Fascism in Europe are identified as internal as much as external threats, and the nature of the threat is again explored in terms of a particular psychology: a mentality which is driven by motivation gendered as specifically masculine, within a fading but still dangerous imperial system which is militarist, patriarchal and backward-looking. The mood and tone are much lighter and more 'airy' than in *Three Guineas*.<sup>3</sup> Woolf's last novel, although ambivalent as ever in its reading of history, registers a different note of intellectual pessimism than hitherto.

In connecting the 'post-imperial' moment to a shift in perspective when the ideology of empire begins to lose its grip on popular consciousness and its capacity to elicit an automatic patriotic reflex, Esty identifies a 'challenge to high culture' posed by the prospect of empire's end: a fundamental critique of the sovereign subject links the 'erosion of the aesthetic domain and the demise of colonialism itself' (10). The 'so-called New Imperialism of 1870 -1900', a period of rapid consolidation and expansion of Britain's formal empire, was already 'a symptom and effect of its decline in the world';<sup>4</sup> the eclipse of empire is already evident in its highest stage;<sup>5</sup> modernism was from the beginning characterised by an 'awareness that imperialism was corrupt or weakening or both'.<sup>6</sup> Unwonted self-questioning, prompted by awareness of these contradictions and growing international uncertainty, in Esty's view, gives rise in the post-imperial period to a new 'anthropological self-consciousness' (93) and to the emergence of autoethnographic modes of representing Englishness. Woolf's representation of the pageant in *Between the Acts* is then an example of such an autoethnographical interpretive method. The gendered oppositions set up between different versions of Englishness reflect, in Esty's analysis, Woolf's identification of a moment of struggle and tension between opposing

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<sup>3</sup> *A Writer's Diary*, 292.

<sup>4</sup> Porter, B. 1975. *Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism 1850-1970*, p.xi, quoted in Esty 2004 (233).

<sup>5</sup> 'For the first time the world is completely divided up, so that in future *only* redivision is possible'. Lenin, V. I. 1917. *Imperialism, Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Selected Works, quoted in Esty 2004 (29).

<sup>6</sup> Said, E. 1984. *Culture and imperialism*, 188, quoted in Esty (29).

models of English history, out of which a new configuration may emerge. In this reading the elder siblings, Lucy Swithin and Bart Oliver (the old empire man and 'India hand'), 'represent different versions of Englishness: one "pastoral and insular"; the other 'barbaric and expansive'. The next generation, Giles and Isa Oliver (Giles, a London stockbroker, representing 'modern British forces of empire and finance' and 'the links between capitalism, imperialism and patriarchal aggression'), repeat the terms of the gendered pairing of their elders, so that the 'frozen or unresolved quality of the dialectic' established by the elders 'is more or less replayed in the next generation'. Incipient cultural change is, however, announced by the unexpected arrival of another pair: Mrs Manresa, 'a brash Philistine who captivates the Oliver men' and the homosexual William Dodge, 'a feminised artist ... who establishes a rapport with Isa and Lucy ... [and who] understands culture and heritage' (89).<sup>7</sup>

Esty's detailed analysis of *Between the Acts* helps to illuminate the paradoxical way in which Woolf's writing – as de-personalised ('eye-less') as she could make it -- is so open to differing interpretations. Reminding us that in *Three Guineas* Woolf referred to pageantry as one of the most 'dictated, regimented versions of public discourse' (114), Esty suggests that *Between the Acts* 'is designed to express both anti-nationalistic and nationalistic sentiments, authoritarian and anti-authoritarian possibilities in group ritual' and that she is 're-defining not eschewing a national tradition' (93). Thus in her 'troubled half-love for England' and in the 'uncertain performance of nationalism' in the pageant, the 'meaning' of the pageant can be divided more or less equally between an inherited nationalistic cliché, La Trobe's expression of dissident sensibility and the 'accidental quality of spontaneous outdoor art' (93).

Critical commentary on *Between the Acts* largely concurs that Woolf's representation of masculinity is an important key to interpreting it. Esty's reading does not depart from

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<sup>7</sup> Esty notes other instances, frequent in her writing, where Woolf presents 'a conflict of values between pastoral Englishness and imperial Britishness: in *The Voyage Out*, *Mrs Dalloway* and *The Years*, for example, she 'pits imperial men against cultured women' (2004, note p. 250).

Beer's insistence that Woolf 'puts violence at the centre of meaning' in this more than in any other novel. One instance is Woolf's device for framing the pageant with an ongoing account of the rape of a young girl by a group of guardsmen in Whitehall -- Isa reads of it in the newspaper before the performance, and turns later to further reports in the evening paper; the device combines 'fact' and 'fiction' in a manner Woolf developed in *The Pargiters*, *The Years* and *Three Guineas*.<sup>8</sup> Another instance of psychic violence rendered physical is Giles's relief through violence -- any act of violence however improbable or even self-defeating -- as he stamps on the 'monstrous inversion' of a snake choking in its attempt to swallow a frog.<sup>9</sup> The 'vividly heraldic' episode with its 'four-square allegorization of violence, of the oncoming war and greed'<sup>10</sup> gives Woolf's commentary on the 'masculine' logic of the impending war: 'The mass crushed and slithered. The white canvas on his tennis shoes was blood-stained and sticky. But it was action. Action relieved him' (BA 2008, 89). Giles's anger is directed against 'Manresa (lust)', against 'Dodge (perversion), and 'himself (coward)' and thus seems to be sexually as well as politically charged in lethal combination. Laura Marcus suggests that Dodge, 'to whose homosexuality Woolf repeatedly alludes ... plays a crucial part in the novel's exploration of masculinity, aggression, and repression'.<sup>11</sup> Esty comments that in Woolf's treatment of these themes in *Three Guineas*, she 'frequently returned to the idea that an unbalanced sexual-aggressive drive, central to the ways and means of patriarchal power, both fuelled and was fuelled by the imperial enterprise' (95).

Gilbert and Gubar conclude that the village pageant in *Between the Acts* 'definitively argues the case for the artifice of history'; it is 'Woolf's own attempt to reinvent the march of time' -- through a re-periodisation of literary history ('there is Restoration Comedy but no restoration'; an 'Age of Reason but no Romantic period'). Genres are 're-appropriated'

<sup>8</sup> An actual crime which took place on 27 April 1938, the trial of the guardsmen being reported in *The Times* in June and July of the same year.

<sup>9</sup> Hussey (1995, 195) suggests as the probable source of this scene Vita Sackville-West's *Country Notes in Wartime*, (a collection of pieces first published in the *New Statesman and Nation*). "July 1940" ends with Sackville-West's description of finding a frog, "his body flattened in terror against the wall" while an adder, "a beautiful snake full of venom," waited to eat it: "I thought of Roumania and Greece, with the spiteful tongue shooting out towards them" (72).

<sup>10</sup> Beer 1996, 20.

<sup>11</sup> Laura Marcus 1997, 176.

and 're-authored' – it is 'as if Judith Shakespeare had been alive, writing all along in the "heart of England"'.<sup>12</sup> The complaint of the Colonel, sitting in the pageant's audience: "Why leave out the British Army? What's history without the Army, eh?" (BA 141) underlines the point of the re-periodisation and the studied questioning of a historicist framing which privileges a single, totalizing perspective of world history (in this case the Colonel's self-justifying militaristic/imperialist view of England's might: a God-given right to shape others' histories). The figure of Budge, publican and policeman of the village, stands in as imperial enforcer, 'parodying the busy world of Anglo-Imperial manhood' and reasserting in caricature Bart Oliver's 'imperial patriarchal politics' against a fading *Pax Britannica*.<sup>13</sup> As guardian of custom, prosperity and respectable behaviour, the constable is also agent of surveillance of people's lives and minds:

'I take under my protection and direction the purity and security of all Her Majesty's minions. ... It's a Christian country, our Empire; under the White Queen Victoria. Over thought and religion; drink; dress; manners; marriage too, I wield my truncheon. ... The ruler of an Empire must keep his eye on the cot; spy too in the kitchen; drawing-room; library; wherever one or two, me and you, come together. Purity our watchword; prosperity and respectability' (BA 145-6 ).

For Esty, Budge's caricature of masculine, imperial values and methods, registers a key turn: 'empire is no longer seen as a political error of the British establishment but as a dated, outmoded enterprise belonging to an earlier rather foolish era' (92). And he sees the pageant's uncertain performance of nationalism as enacting an 'anthropology of here and now', 'We' is substituted for the modernist 'I' (104).

Kermode considers the pageant as the novel's 'main contrapuntal instrument' (BA 2008, xxx). The Interval temporarily destroys unity between play and audience; their return preserves 'the illusion of art' (xxxii). 'But the main act of unification is still to come. Miss La Trobe will 'douche' the audience in present time – swallows, cows, the tick of the [gramophone] needle – and then, as the pageant reaches the present day, turn the actors into walking mirrors, so that the audience becomes what it sees' (xxxii). Jackie Kay interprets the *coup de théâtre* of the pageant's finale – the transgression of the

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<sup>12</sup> Gilbert and Gubar 1994, Vol. 3, 51, 52.

<sup>13</sup> Esty 2004, 92, 94.

representational frontier between stage and audience as the actors turn mirrors upon the audience – as a device which permeates the whole structure of the novel. It breaks down the division between writer and reader, encouraging readers 'to write as we read, inside our own heads'. Woolf's play with language,<sup>14</sup> 'freely associating to such a degree that our own minds can't help but participate ... forces us to become part of it, part of the whole, in the way that the audience at the pageant suddenly becomes part of the play. Virginia Woolf shines the mirror on her readers. Ourselves'.<sup>15</sup>

Ferrer compares Woolf's pageant-novel to Artaud's *théâtre de la cruauté* – torture for the spectators: "'We remain seated", "We are the audience" ... Manacled to a rock he [Giles] was, and forced to behold indescribable horror'.<sup>16</sup> Ferrer further suggests that, 'as in *The Waves*, this involution of the narrative perspective threatens the scenographic limit' (103). The curtain rising at the end of the book on a new act which is beyond the book (not recounted) 'suggests a different sense of the novel's title'. '*Between the Acts* would no longer be the interval of reality between two times of theatrical illusion, but rather the world of pretence and inauthenticity which separates the true human acts' – namely the act of copulation between Isa and Giles following a violent preamble. The play boxes in 'spaces of de-realization (play within a play within a play, Elizabethan play inside the pageant itself inside the novel)'. We, the readers 'never – even *between the acts* of Miss La Trobe's play – leave representation'; the landscape is only 'the view', through the description of it in a guidebook of a hundred years ago (BA 48), or in the ways it could be painted by artists (BA 12).

Ferrer's suggestion that 'the characters are not beings of flesh and blood but social masks' and his reading of the 'spaces of de-realization' constructed within the novel, invoke Bourdieu's sociological insight that Woolf's fiction emphasises the ludic quality of

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<sup>14</sup> Kermode (2000) analyses Woolf's 'triadic' patterns of language and suggests that Bernard's desired 'little language such as lovers use' (TW 246) finds its 'fullest expression' in the texture of language in *Between the Acts*. 'The world will be present in the texture of the book itself' (*Between the Acts* Introduction, xvii).

<sup>15</sup> Kay, J. 2005, *Between the Acts*, Introduction, xii.

<sup>16</sup> Ferrer, D. 1990, 98.

social life. Ferrer's reading serves to strengthen a conclusion that would see Woolf's final novel as taking further -- to the limits of representational conventions -- the autoethnographic methods which she had developed throughout the whole sequence of novels. Furthermore, they are so integrated within the texture of the novel that for the contemporary reader, as Kay suggests, they are part of a use of language which Kermode acknowledges is 'work for the reader [--] and the demands on the reader are almost exorbitant' (2000, xxiv). If, however, the reader is in this way encouraged to think, as Cuddy-Keane suggests is Woolf's fictional strategy, one effect of autoethnographical reading is thinking that is 'an historical, sociological, comparative, interpretive, and somewhat catch-as-catch-can enterprise, one whose aim is to render obscure matters intelligible by providing them with an informing context' -- as Geertz suggests when he names the 'study of thinking as it goes on in ... modern life' as "ethnography".<sup>17</sup>

Kermode provides many examples of thought responses to Woolf's demanding language. Mrs Manresa 'bridges two worlds ... the world of new vulgar wealth, perhaps, and the world of the Olivers'. 'Giles, changing from city to cricket clothes, is another such bridge' (xxx). The significance of the weather ('would it be wet or fine; and every year it was -- one or the other') merges in Isa's mind with the newspaper account of the girl's rape by soldiers to set 'this year' apart: the summer of 1939, when 'soldierly lust and the screams of a victim under the imminence of war' gives 'a special sense ... to the perennial antithesis'. This year's debate at Poyntz Hall about the weather on the day of the pageant sets the story of the Olivers

at the crisis, in that summer when we did not know certainly if the political weather of Europe would be wet or fine; or rather we did know, but were caught as if in a still moment of history -- like, perhaps, that long moment in *Macbeth* when, his mind still not quite made up, Macbeth is challenged by his wife to be a man and murder.<sup>18</sup>

The moment which hangs there is presaged by and brings to an end a time when Hamlet could, not ignobly, take up arms; when Mr Ramsay (capable in predicting the weather)

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<sup>17</sup> Geertz, 'The Way We Think Now: Ethnography of Modern Thought' in Geertz 1993, 152.

<sup>18</sup> *Between the Acts* Introduction, 2000, xxiv; xxxiv.



could still imagine himself dying standing at his post; when Clarissa Dalloway could find solace in Baron Marbot's *Mémoires*, recounting nobility in defeat as Napoleon's army retreats from Moscow in 1812.<sup>19</sup>

The fine balance achieved in *Between the Acts* between impending disaster and reassuring continuity depends on many elements, including the novel's demanding language and the work of thinking and apprehension required of the reader (as suggested in different ways by Kermode and Kay). The litany of imperial surveillance pronounced by the village publican and policeman, Budge, at the end of the pageant: 'Purity our watchword; prosperity and respectability', combines paternal reassurance with authoritarian coercion, and represents an extreme version of the masculine middle-brow mentality (the pre-packaged didacticism of Anglo-Saxon anti-intellectualism) which Woolf attacked in her journalistic interventions in the late 1920s and early 30s 'Battle of the Brows' (see the discussion at the end of the next section). Woolf's demand on readers of her last novel is the same (though in different mode) as that which she makes in *Three Guineas*: the interpellated reader is enjoined to actively think along lines which run counter to the jargon of unthinking patriotism. Such demands place Woolf firmly within a tradition of twentieth century dissent, of writers and thinkers (e.g. Julien Benda in France in the 1920s, C. Wright Mills in the US in the 1950s) who believed in the moral duty of intellectuals to affirm 'truth' against the debasement of language and the manipulation of 'history' involved in the mobilisation of nations for 'seemingly permanent war'. The next section discusses Woolf's intellectual pessimism, her optimistic involvement in the project of promoting a 'democratic high-brow' mentality, and her claims to be considered (retrospectively) as a public intellectual.

### **3) Woolf as Public Intellectual**

Woolf's standing as an intellectual today is arguably still occluded and distorted by preconceptions and hostilities owing to an over-determined iconic status which has

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<sup>19</sup> Mrs Dalloway, 27.

accrued to her name throughout the sometimes stormy reception history of her work in Britain, North America and elsewhere.<sup>20</sup> However, the weight of serious scholarship over recent decades appears to be steadily tipping the scales towards recognition (so far at least within the fields of Woolf studies and literary modernism) of her significance not only as a central figure of modernist fiction, champion of first wave feminism, researcher and theorist of women's writing, but also as a left-leaning intellectual who entered public debates during the 1930s.

This final section of the chapter attempts to weigh recent reassessment of Woolf's public interventions and literary/intellectual legacy in terms of the current balance of serious consideration of her as 'public intellectual'.<sup>21</sup> Some reference is made to twentieth-century debates about the social role of intellectuals in the English-speaking world. Further comparison is made between Woolf and Bourdieu in terms of their respective choice of research topics, modes of public intervention, and shared interest in analysing changing relations of gender and power; and other comparisons draw attention to different aspects of the uneven progress of Woolf's intellectual reputation. Comments made on Woolf as a feminist and modernist writer (though not as a writer whose modernism was closely connected to her feminism) by Edward Said in his 1993 Reith Lectures on 'Representations of the Intellectual' and elsewhere, serve as illustration of ways in which her reputation was for a time historically 'frozen' within a mould created by 'the family story' (especially as promulgated by Quentin Bell's biography of Woolf in 1972) that she was a 'genius' only tangentially attached to the 'real world'.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Brenda Silver (1999), in *Virginia Woolf Icon*, gives a detailed account of the vicissitudes of Woolf's reputation on both sides of the Atlantic, but especially from the 1960s to 1980s in the US, where Edward Albee's play (and the 1966 film of) *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, media coverage and contending appropriations of her image, all contributed in complex ways to exaggerated distortion of her literary and intellectual heritage. This compounded the already fraught 'custody battles' over her reputation and social class affiliation in Britain.

<sup>21</sup> Marcus, J., ed., *Three Guineas* 2006, claims this status for Woolf following 1970s first wave feminism. See Chapter Two.

<sup>22</sup> Barrett 2013, 85.

The role of public intellectual has been variously defined.<sup>23</sup> In the 1920s two influential views from right and left, reflecting different understandings of the intellectual's ideological function in conditions of social upheaval and political struggle, provide relevant context for consideration of Woolf's claims and tactics as a publicly intervening intellectual. Julien Benda's conservative vision of the sacred duties of intellectuals in clerical orders is considered first. In *La Trahison des Clercs*, 1927,<sup>24</sup> Benda excoriates the traditional elite caste of ecclesiastical moralists, the clerics, for betrayal of duty in succumbing to 'political passions' and 'patriotic fanaticism' by permitting themselves to enter into the materialism and egotism of the everyday world. He condemns in particular their partisan entry into explosive interwar debate about patriotic nationalism; more generally, their ceding moral authority (deriving from traditional spiritual removal and metaphysical distance from the world) by entering the present 'age of politics' where individual self-interest was already universalised, amounts to abandonment of 'the inviolate citadel of disinterested speculation' (58) and the contemplative watchword: 'My kingdom is not of this world' (30). The betrayal is shocking enough in that their collusion further encourages the materialistic excesses occupying 'plebian minds', but historians' silence is 'more shocking' because it 'prevent[s] the layman from hearing speech different from that of the market place'. Meanwhile 'men of politics ... make use of history' for their own ends; the 'really cunning ones assume the mask of disinterest' (56). Benda singles out the 'specific egotism' of Italian Fascism as particularly dangerous for its exercise of pride: 'more powerful than self-interest'; nationalistic pride fuels jingoism, 'a form of patriotism specially invented by democracies'. Such 'national susceptibility ... provides leaders with new and most effective methods for starting the wars that they need' (10, 11, 13).

Benda's Catholic conservative position (inflected with right-wing modernist anti-fascist attitudes) contrasts with Woolf's engagement with similar issues from her rather different, left-liberal political standpoint. Woolf's anti-war polemics in *Three Guineas* also singles out jingoistic nationalism as dangerous and irrational. However, unlike Benda's appeal to

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<sup>23</sup> Etzioni and Bowditch, 2006.

<sup>24</sup> Translated by the right-leaning modernist poet, Richard Aldington (1928), as *The Great Betrayal*.

elite ecclesiastical traditionalism, Woolf claims female authority from early Christian and Classical sources: an early Christian moment of gender equality when women had the right to preach; and Antigone's example of standing publicly against arbitrary male authority. Woolf's position also differs in that rather than bemoaning betrayal by a traditional elite, she foregrounds her gendered exclusion from the public, masculine world of intellectual debate, and uses her outside-ness as a tactical, rhetorical stance from which to mount an attack on a traditional elite, i.e. educated, but wrong-headed, men of her own class. A particular target of Woolf's critique of the masculine presumption of dominance and authority over women, are men of her own class who claim such authority, but who ignore that it is based not just upon the strength of their controlling ownership (as a ruling class) of economic power, but that it is also invisibly, secretly based (as psychology reveals) upon their own dependency on women, whose assumed inferiority is the price and guarantee of their assumed superiority. Woolf to some extent shares with Benda a belief that writers and intellectuals should stand at a remove from the confusion, effervescence, furore of public debate: she feared at one moment that *The Years* was 'dangerously near propaganda',<sup>25</sup> although usually she was assiduous in maintaining distance and detachment, but never indifference.

Surveying the social (and decidedly secular) functions of intellectuals in the US some thirty years later in 'On Knowledge and Power',<sup>26</sup> C Wright Mills is dismayed by the loss of 'the grand role of reason in civilization', by the debased calibre and culture of the elite ('given the immorality of accomplishment in terms of which they are selected') and by its separation into an elite of power and an elite of culture. A prevailing conservatism among intellectuals who 'have been giving up the old ideal of the public relevance of knowledge' had led to the intellectual collapse of liberalism and its replacement by 'a political rhetoric' and a debasement of language in which liberalism's key terms 'have become the common denominators of the political vocabulary, and hence have been stretched beyond any usefulness as a way of defining issues and stating positions' (247-8). The administrative

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<sup>25</sup> *A Writer's Diary*, 245.

<sup>26</sup> The article first appeared in *Dissent* 2, 3, 1955; reprinted in Etzioni and Bowditch 2006, 247-258.

liberalism of the 1930s having been 'swallowed up by economic boom and military fright', and 'while the intellectuals have been embraced by the new conservative gentility', the 'silent conservatives of corporation, army, and state ... have ridden into power on all those structural trends set into motion and accelerated by the organization of the nation for seemingly permanent war' (250). In opposition to these structural tendencies and the separation of knowledge from power, Mills calls for active intervention of intellectuals as 'the moral conscience of ... society, at least with reference to the value of truth', for the 'maintenance of an adequate definition of reality' by finding out 'as much of the truth as he can'. The intellectual's role is 'to deny publicly what he knows to be false', 'to ask serious questions', and if a political intellectual, 'he asks his questions of those in power' (256, 257). Mills's definition of intellectuals as society's 'moral conscience' and his emphasis upon 'the value of truth' against the debasement of language and thought which ensues when intellectuals give up 'the old ideal of the public relevance of knowledge' find echoes in *Three Guineas*. Woolf's text is deliberately framed in epistolary form 'to ask serious questions' – above all 'why war?' – of men in power, and also in her contributions to debates on public education and 'democratic highbrow-ism' in the interwar decades.

Etzioni sees C Wright Mills and Edward Said as notable exponents of the Enlightenment philosopher Condorcet's view of the critical orientation of intellectuals: devoted to the 'tracking down of prejudices in the hiding places where priests, the schools, the government and all long established institutions had gathered and protected them' (2). For Mills the intellectual should function as 'moral conscience of his society', an expectation which rejects the 'non-partisan and non-ideological' compliant neutrality of the 'house intellectuals' ('false prophets'). For Said, engaged intellectuals are those who question patriotic nationalism, corporate thinking, and a sense of class, racial or gender privilege. Etzioni also cites Mannheim's view that academics are relatively more free than other members of society to develop perspectives which diverge from what might be expected on the basis of their income, prestige, racial origin etc. (10). Bourdieu's analysis of French intellectuals' professional and political positioning in the stand-off which

culminated in the 1968 events, takes this reasoning further in *Homo Academicus* (1984) (as discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis). In plotting the power and influence (by discipline and political affiliation) of academics on an ethnographic matrix (illustrated in the book) Bourdieu is candid about his aim of trapping 'the supreme classifier' (the academic) in 'the net of his own classifications' (1998 xi).

This thesis has pointed to certain parallels between Bourdieu's exacting insider critical stance as sociologist<sup>27</sup> and Woolf's outsider critique, as novelist and essayist, of masculine pretensions in academic and other fields. Swartz (2003) examines the political conditions in late twentieth century France which caused Bourdieu to move away from the scientifically detached stance of analytical sociology to a position of direct engagement in political debate as a public intellectual in later life. Bourdieu's break with 'received views' in establishing himself in his professional field is in some respects parallel (in a very different intellectual field but with similarly deliberate professional intent) to Woolf's intellectual, aesthetic and political break in the mid-1920s from conventions of fiction set by her predecessors, the masculine Edwardian 'materialists'.<sup>28</sup> Bourdieu's understanding that sociology has to be a study of power both recalls and can be used to throw light upon Woolf's efforts, e.g. in *The Pargiters* draft, to show how the hidden agencies of power and money in a patriarchal household shape domestic life and restrict female access to the public world. Both writers share an interest in unveiling the mechanisms of power. Swartz comments on Bourdieu's methodological intent: '[s]ince the effective exercise of power requires legitimation, the practice of sociological research has the effect of unmasking and debunking hidden, taken-for-granted power relations shaping social life' (797). Woolf's understanding of the intimate relationship between knowledge and power in upholding the dominant and privileged position of fathers and brothers formed through elite education and structures of homosocial solidarity in the academic and other

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<sup>27</sup> A 'critical social scientific research orientation' was central to the research centre he [Bourdieu] established and the journal he founded, according to the principle that '[t]he first task of sociological analysis is to break with received views of the social world, including political views, and to develop its own scientific analysis of the social world' (Swartz 2003, 796).

<sup>28</sup> Cf Woolf's essays on literary method: 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown' (1923); 'Modern Fiction' (1925).

professional fields (a theme which permeates her writing at every stage), is helpfully illuminated by Bourdieu's recognition that a theory of knowledge is a dimension of political theory. '[T]he symbolic power to impose the principles of construction of reality, in particular of social reality, is a major dimension of political power'.<sup>29</sup> Woolf actively pursues this connection throughout her writing, and in an increasingly closely focused way in her later work. From the demise of the philosopher-king and father-figure, Mr Ramsay, at the end of *To The Lighthouse* to the symbiotic relationship elaborated in *Three Guineas* between domestic and national dictators and the ceremonially robed men of power who control British institutions of state, law, church and education, she makes use of psychoanalytic theory and an incipient form of sociological analysis of 'history in the raw' to unmask symbolic forms of patriarchal power.

A further parallel between Woolf and Bourdieu is that both became active public intellectuals relatively late in life and both with a certain unwillingness, though impelled by the logic of their work and research interests and by national and international events. Bourdieu in *The Weight of the Word* (1993) felt compelled to intervene politically, having investigated the social effects of neoliberal policies in France, particularly in terms of the impoverishment, marginalisation and increasingly precarious existence of the poor and working classes. In his later life, Bourdieu's main concern was globalization and its effects – upon those who benefited least from it, and (like C Wright Mills before him in the US in the 1950s) was impelled by 'urgency to speak out against modern neoliberal discourse that had become so dominant in political debate'.<sup>30</sup>

Woolf's compulsion to speak out and write explicitly about the injustice of female subordination within a patriarchal structure of kinship relations and under a liberal democracy which formally recognised the bourgeois rights of newly enfranchised women but in the actuality of lived experience more frequently denied them, was slow in maturing. One of her major political-polemical essays (*A Room of One's Own*) and her essay,

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<sup>29</sup> Bourdieu 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 165.

<sup>30</sup> Swartz 807.

'Professions for Women',<sup>31</sup> both originated as lectures and were later developed as considered written statements of her political views. Her second major political-polemical essay (*Three Guineas*) developed out of *The Pargiters* draft, and her writing and research project of the 1930s on the changing socio-political position of women in the decades following political enfranchisement and the granting of their right to enter professional employment – decades which also saw the rise of Fascism in Europe. Having broached such topics as an invited speaker or as part of a lengthy project of research and writing focusing on relations of domination and subordination in both private and public spheres, Woolf clearly felt compelled to pursue the arguments to such conclusions as she could reach, even though this came to involve personal and public confrontation (as in the very mixed responses to *Three Guineas*).

A different kind of correspondence between Woolf and Edward Said (from that with Bourdieu) is suggested by a certain similarity between Said's imposed situation as exile and displaced intellectual and Woolf's structurally alienated and rhetorically chosen position as outsider. For Said, exile is both an actual and a metaphorical condition, derived partly from the 'social and political history of dislocation and migration', and from the fact that even intellectuals who are lifelong members of a society can be divided into insiders (yea-sayers) 'flourishing in it without an overwhelming sense of dissonance or dissent'; and outsiders (nay-sayers) 'individuals at odds with their society and therefore outsiders and exiles so far as privileges, power, and honors are concerned'.<sup>32</sup> The latter category fits Woolf's self-description as an outsider by gender surprisingly well. Jacqueline Rose, however, problematizes Woolf's outsider stance, specifically her 'vision of feminized migrancy' in considering women as fortunate in being denied the full 'stigma of nationality' – having no country and thus eluding the claims of nationalistic patriotism in

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<sup>31</sup> First given as a speech to the London branch of the National Society for Women's Service in 1931, 'Professions for Women' exists in various versions: as published essay (1942) and in drafts of *The Pargiters*. The idea for the speech was as a potential sequel to *A Room of One's Own* and the germ of the writing project which produced *The Pargiters*, and eventually *The Years* and *Three Guineas*. Hussey 1995, 218.

<sup>32</sup> *Representations of the Intellectual: 1993 Reith lectures*, 1994, 39.



time of war.<sup>33</sup> Rose sees Woolf's 'unsettled self-positioning' as an evasion, and also as both curse and privilege – 'alternately exclusion from, or belonging to, all possible worlds' (129).<sup>34</sup> While Said commends the politics of *A Room of One's Own*, he, perhaps surprisingly, makes no obvious reference to *Three Guineas*, an omission which most likely seems attributable to the peculiar belatedness in public recognition of Woolf's claim to intellectual status.

In the Lectures Said cites Benda, Gramsci, and C Wright Mills in defining key aspects of the intellectual's social function. He singles out figures who inspired him personally: James Baldwin, Malcolm X, Chomsky, Vidal and Foucault – courageous voices in unmasking, resisting and disputing 'the images, official narratives, justifications of power circulated by an increasingly powerful media'. Virginia Woolf also is identified (in the second lecture) as a fine example (Chomsky and Vidal in the US are others) of the intellectual's responsibility to demonstrate how group or national identity 'is not a natural or god-given entity but is a constructed, manufactured, ... invented object, with a history of struggle and conquest behind it, that it is sometimes important to represent'. Said describes *A Room of One's Own* as 'a crucial text for the modern feminist intellectual', separating out, as it does, from the language and power of patriarchy 'a new sensitivity to the place, both subordinate and usually not thought about but hidden, of women', and it 'impressively' focuses on 'the relationship between male, that is, dominant, and female, that is, secondary and occluded values' (25, 26). Said comments on Woolf's skilful manner of address to both audience and topic in framing her argument (a combination of vulnerability – in her openness – and rational argument), and he is sensitive to the weight of the 'structure of power and influence, a massed history of already articulated values and ideas' which confronts a woman writer. 'When Woolf describes how it is that those male values are already set when a woman takes up her pen to write, she is also

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<sup>33</sup> Rose 1996, 13. The context of Rose's discussion is, however, the state of Israel where questions of 'culture', 'identity' and 'nationality' are already especially problematic.

<sup>34</sup> See discussion in Chapter Two on Woolf's feminism by editors of *Three Guineas* and *A Room of One's Own*, especially Barrett's comments about what she considers to be Woolf's evasive strategies.

describing the relationship that obtains when the individual intellectual begins to write or speak' (26). In making an identification here between the women writer and the 'unsettling' and 'lonely condition' of the dissenting intellectual (his description of his own position) outside the dominant (male dominated) institutions (with 'no office to protect or territory to consolidate and guard'), Said seems to anticipate Woolf's own later rhetorically explicit adoption of the 'outsider' position in *Three Guineas*. It is interesting, however, in terms of the sharply contrasting reception of Woolf's two major political essays, to note that in 1993 Said focuses only on *A Room of One's Own* and Woolf's (already established) reputation as theorist/intellectual of women's writing, and not on her later much more controversial anti-war public intervention in *Three Guineas*.

There is some irony in the fact that Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism*,<sup>35</sup> a synthesizing account of imperialism's shaping of European cultural production, makes just two passing references to the work of Virginia Woolf,<sup>36</sup> when it is in part due to the influence of Said's ideas in challenging the imperialist and Eurocentric epistemological frame and cultural perspective that Woolf's hard-won reputation as an anti-imperialist cultural and literary critic has only relatively recently emerged. At the foundation of Woolf's theory of women's writing is her practice as writer/researcher of an 'occluded history', a practical and theoretical stance which accords closely with Said's critical, historical stance *vis à vis* the theory and practice of orientalism -- that, told from the point of view of the subordinated and excluded, history is critique and 'not the dutiful replication of colonialist objects, ideologies, and arguments' (302). Two decades after Said's book and Reith lectures, recent scholarship on Woolf has begun to establish her position as a

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<sup>35</sup> Published in 1993, the same year as he delivered the Reith lectures.

<sup>36</sup> Said implicitly aligns Woolf with the 'Islamic intellectual', Ali Shariati, 'a prime force in the early days of the Iranian Revolution', comparing his notion of 'man' (though not 'woman') as in constant migration from 'organized orthodoxy', with Woolf's 'tentative authorization of women's experience' in *A Room of One's Own* (405). Said also indicates various ways in which European modernism 'began to take due account of imperial "delusions and discoveries"': retreat into irony; reformulation of the old through fragments and juxtaposition; recourse to 'circularity of structure, inclusive and open at the same time'. *To The Lighthouse* is listed alongside *Ulysses*, *Heart of Darkness*, *A la recherche*, *The Waste Land*, *Cantos*, as an example of such circularity of structure (229).

significant critic of British imperialism, in her fiction as well as in her essays, though it is not yet sufficiently established to rebalance a still male-defined intellectual canon.

Given Said's view that 'in the end it is the intellectual as a representative figure that matters – someone who visibly represents a standpoint of some kind ... who makes articulate representations to his or her public despite all sorts of barriers' (10), and that '[t]oday, everyone who works in any field connected with the production or distribution of knowledge is an intellectual in Gramsci's sense' (7), there is affinity also between Woolf and Said in that they share a specific intellectual function as specialists in literary production and criticism. In the first lecture, Said identifies a decisive shift in the literary representation of social reality:

in certain unusual nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century novels – Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*, Flaubert's *Sentimental Education*, Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* – in which the representation of social reality is profoundly influenced, even decisively changed by the sudden appearance of a new actor, the modern young intellectual (11).

He quotes Seamus Deane's 'excellent observation' that Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist* (1916) is 'the first novel in the English language in which a passion for thinking is fully presented'; that for young Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses* (1922) (for each 'in a manner consonant with his personality and education') 'thinking is a mode of experiencing the world'.<sup>37</sup> By contrast 'young men and women whose major concern is the life of the mind in society' are not to be found among their antecedents, the protagonists of Dickens, Thackeray, Austen, Hardy, 'nor even George Eliot' (12).

Woolf's route away from the conventional limitations of her forebears is not entirely different from Joyce's, although she employs strategies that are very much her own for overcoming 'the anxiety of influence' of both female and male literary ancestors and in developing modernist fictional methods for presenting not so much thinking as representations of human consciousness and of social life from a variety of perspectives.

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<sup>37</sup> Deane, 1985, 75-6.

However, for Rachel Vinrace, the protagonist of Woolf's first novel, *The Voyage Out* (1915), thinking (as for Stephen Dedalus) is a primary 'mode of experiencing the world' -- but with the significant difference that this hitherto over-protected but paternally bullied and educationally under-developed young woman, after sampling what the male academic mode of thinking has to offer, decides to reject it -- or perhaps rather, simply turns her face away. In the end, after a great deal of her own self-orienting enquiry and active, alternative thinking, she finds that not much of the conventional wisdom proffered by her Bloomsbury-ite mentors does in fact enrich or guide her in her voyage out. Furthermore, Rachel also manages to evade bourgeois marriage through the same strategy, by succumbing to mysterious illness -- which is Woolf's way in this novel of undermining the cultural myth of nineteenth-century *Bildung* and the conventional patriarchal marriage plot. Thus, while the heroine of Woolf's first novel hardly rivals Joyce's Stephen Dedalus as a thinker, yet in sampling and then rejecting male-defined knowledge as it is belatedly presented to her, she points the way towards Woolf's later strategies for out-thinking her masculine forebears and contemporaries. A later manifestation of the thinking young woman, in *Three Guineas*, stands strategically on the threshold of the private house to interpellate her male professional counterpart. Surveying the masculine world of power, privilege, war mongering and money making from a bridge across the Thames, she assesses the gains, losses, foreseeable consequences of joining the end of the masculine procession of achievement. Seeking to demonstrate that thinking, writing and talking are more productive than fighting, she illustrates the dilemma that Woolf poses to her readers -- as Rose (1996, 53) puts it: 'How can the dispossessed claim their legitimate rights without taking on the psychic trappings of the oppressor? ... How can women stake their claim to the institutions and forms of public being without entering the procession that leads to war?' Deane's reading of Dedalus as a thinking protagonist who mentally forges a modern, decolonised selfhood thus contrasts both historically and politically with Woolf's female protagonists who have little choice but to follow a much more indirect route out of traditional gendered subordination. Through strategies of questioning and detachment, they struggle to

achieve an as yet uncertain personal agency, both still more or less constrained by tradition and conditioned by new possibility. Woolf's own route to public recognition as an intellectual is also indirect and still unfolding.

Consideration of two further commentators will complete this discussion of Woolf's still evolving intellectual and political reputation: Michèle Barrett's original work on Virginia Woolf as theorist of women's writing and her current account of her contribution as researcher to Leonard Woolf's *Empire and Commerce in Africa* (1920); and Melba Cuddy-Keane's work on Woolf as a 'democratic highbrow' and champion of the 'classless intellectual'. Barrett's seminal collection and commentary, *Virginia Woolf on Women and Writing; Her Essays, Assessments and Arguments* (1979), and her recent work on Woolf's contributions to research for Leonard Woolf's *Empire and Commerce in Africa* (1920) span a relatively long period of re-appraisal of Woolf's intellectual legacy. In her summary of Woolf's argument in *A Room of One's Own* Barrett emphasises that, in the early twentieth-century context in which Woolf was writing, it is the social situation of the female writer, 'that to some extent at least, determines the nature of the work produced', and that the critical reception of texts by female authors is crucially affected by the fact that 'criticism was in the hands of men' and was still heavily influenced by 'the image of women presented in the predominantly male literary tradition'. The novels are concerned with 'exploration of the conscious and unconscious mind, and also with the relation of states of mind to the public, social relations in which they were embedded' (10, 11, 14).<sup>38</sup> Barrett locates Woolf's political ideas as being 'relatively in advance of the generally left(ish) Fabian milieu in which she lived and worked', particularly in terms of her arguments about the position of women. Barrett notes Quentin Bell's disagreement with his aunt's argument in *Three Guineas* about the 'nature of manhood and the nature of womanhood' and the insistence 'both by Italian and German dictators' that it is 'indeed the essence of manhood to fight'. 'Hitler, for example, draws a distinction between 'a nation of pacifists and a nation of men'; both dictators 'repeatedly insist that it is the nature of

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<sup>38</sup> *Women and Writing*, ed Barrett, 1979, 10, 11, 14.

womanhood to heal the wounds of the fighter' (TG, 322). Bell comments in his biography that Woolf's friends 'were silent or critical about this argument' while his own reaction was that it seemed wrong to connect the issue of women's rights with the 'immediate question of what we were to do to meet the ever-growing menace of Fascism and war' (1976, vol 2, 205).<sup>39</sup> Barrett's recent work continues the discussion, if not dispute, between the (male) custodians of Woolf's estate (initially Leonard Woolf and then Quentin Bell) about how to define Woolf's intellectual achievement. The 'family story' emphasising her 'genius' and detachment from the public world seeks to minimise her political commitments and public interventions. Thus Barrett's continuing explorations in archives of Virginia Woolf's notebooks held at Sussex University and the many volumes of notebooks she helped to compile in assisting Leonard's research on global trade, held in the LSE library, reveal that she made substantial contributions to the research which have so far been barely acknowledged.<sup>40</sup> The research project initially focused broadly on international trade (only later was the focus restricted to Africa). Barrett's research reveals that Virginia Woolf's contribution during the period 1917–1918 as 'a meticulous, even slightly pedantic scholar' was substantial, indicating her extensive reading and research into documents relating to import/export trading flows and consular and other reports to produce carefully worded quotations and hand-drawn tables of figures covering hundreds of pages of notebooks. Reviews of *Empire and Commerce in Africa* praised the empirical base of the work, its definitive socialist statements, and the 'battering ram of historical knowledge' displayed; much of the credit for this, in Barrett's estimation, is due to Virginia Woolf's contribution. In particular the material demonstrates her familiarity with the rhetoric of empire and commerce, a rhetoric which echoes, resonates and is woven through the texture of much of her fiction.

Barrett suggests that Virginia Woolf inherited her anti-colonialism from her father and a liberal critique of Empire from her Stephen forebears (Sir James Fitz-James Stephen

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<sup>39</sup> This amounts to a refusal or incapacity, on Bell's part, to accept the main thrust of Woolf's argument in *Three Guineas*.

<sup>40</sup> Michèle Barrett, 'The author as note-taker: Virginia Woolf's research on Extra-European Economy and Politics', IES Modernism Seminar, Senate House, London University, March 1, 2014.

drafted anti-slavery legislation), and that her anti-imperialist politics were not learned from her husband, as some biographers have suggested. In Barrett's view she was more radical in her anti-imperialism than the measured position adopted by her husband in the published book. She herself was not at all forthcoming in her diary about the nature and extent of her contribution to this book, possibly, Barrett suggests, because the research work was considered to be 'therapeutic' and relatively intellectually undemanding at a time when Virginia was advised by doctors to avoid the over-stimulus involved in her own writing. Barrett also suggests that the image of a politically attuned and well informed researcher and scholar that the notebooks reveal was 'inimical to the reputation as a writer of genius' that the 'family story' and official biography promoted and attributed to her.<sup>41</sup>

Also recent and significant for current reassessment of Woolf is Melba Cuddy-Keane's study (2003) of Woolf's 'pedagogy of reading and writing', her political commitment to democratic inclusiveness in education (particularly education for working class women and men) and her ideal of the 'classless intellectual'. Cuddy-Keane juxtaposes discursive material from a wide range of Woolf's essays and reviews to build a consistent picture of Woolf's activist role outside the institutional boundaries of formal education and scholarship in developing an alternative space of dialogical encounter between reader and writer. 'By pursuing the pedagogical outside institutional boundaries, Woolf took the intellectual into the border zone where professional and common reader/write meet' (p. 8). Cuddy-Keane argues that in the period following universal franchise, in line with initiatives to extend adult education to working class men and women, and in the context of rapid commercialised development of mass publication of popular literature, and the insitutionalising development of English Studies in universities (threatening to create even greater divisions between 'high' and 'popular' culture), there was 'an urgent need for accessible cultural education'. Woolf's chosen vehicles for promoting democratic inclusiveness in culture and education were the informal essay, her private press and the

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<sup>41</sup> Barrett 2013, 118.

public library; and her political commitment was informed by her conviction that a democratic society requires for its effective functioning an educated and cultured public.

Cuddy-Keane characterises Woolf's mode of address and style of writing in her informal essays as 'an invitation to think' on the part of the reader. Her intervention in debates around high-, middle-, and low-brow cultures in the 1920s and 1930s demonstrates aspects of her tactics and her commitment to public intellectual debate. In her essay 'Middlebrow' (1932), for example, she opposes the idea of intellectuals as an elite, and takes issue with J B Priestley's 'Anglo-Saxon anti-intellectualism'. Priestley's style of argumentation is essentially masculine, it is suggested, both because the style of address is an insistent harangue and because the content is pre-packaged didacticism, not open to question or further investigation. This, for Woolf, is the essence of the 'middlebrow' in purveying pre-packaged views and discouraging the reader from actively thinking. Cuddy-Keane also refers to Woolf's review in 1926 of the letters of Walter Raleigh (a prominent figure in the introduction of English into the university curriculum, appointed Merton Chair of English Language and Literature at Oxford in 1904), who, 'Woolf suggests, typifies a general turn against intellectual interests, denigrated as effete and feminine, in favor of an aggressive, masculinized ethic'. Woolf identifies a connection 'between Raleigh's code of virility and his increasing celebration of military patriotism. Behind Priestley's jocular "don't be a highbrow, be a man," Woolf implies, lies a gendered discourse intimately connected with war' (30).

Cuddy-Keane shows how, even as English as an academic subject was drawing its disciplinary boundaries, Woolf was developing an approach to public intellectual debate whereby her essays are situated outside those institutional limits. Her view of institutional academic discourse is of a display of hostilities, one view against another, with the common assumption that the view of the speaker should prevail. By contrast, her reader-oriented approach affirms a plurality of views (typified by the form, style and content of her two *Common Reader* collections). This, together with her self-reflexive questioning of her



own approach ('virtually absent in the emerging academic criticism', precursor of New Criticism), the characteristic 'elasticity' of her style – 'that may seem capricious if its implications are missed', and the 'lack of assumed authority [which] can make her essays seem less serious than the academic mode', are all significant features which locate Woolf's practice outside the dominant mode of academic discourse and public intellectual debate (79). Cuddy-Keane's summation of Woolf's ideal of 'democratic highbrow-ism' is that it requires the availability of books and knowledge to all on an equitable basis, and the eradication of prejudice against an intellectual approach (111).

Woolf's public position on democratic access to education and intellectual culture is complementary to her critique of patriarchy as a system which enshrines exclusive male privilege. Her account in the novels of the protracted endings of empire and of the Victorian/Edwardian hegemonic model of masculinity ('the empire of the father') draws both on her understanding of social change as the product of collective struggles against class and gender inequalities, and on her analysis of the domestic sphere as the site where inequalities between male and female kin are created and perpetuated.

This study of masculinity as constructed in Woolf's fiction has broached an area of Woolf Studies which has potential for further exploration. In this study the main focus is upon the performance of masculinity according to a particular hegemonic standard, a priority which has perhaps meant that other styles of masculine performance have received less attention than is due. For example the evident links between homosociality and homosexuality is a topic which could productively be explored in future. Also worthy of further study are Woolf's hints of her optimistic belief in a differently, more equitably configured gender order, suggesting an emergent manliness beyond the period of fifty years or so that she set as an elusive frontier constraining change. While these glimpses are intriguing but fleeting, a possible 'new manliness' may be more discernable to future research by 'looking behind' some of the more substantial images which Woolf offers of a new womanliness. One such example, and a strikingly concrete one (not in Woolf's own

words, but a reported encounter), is the evocation in the endnotes of *Three Guineas* of Sergeant Amalia Bonilla, a cavalrywoman and squadron leader of the Spanish Republican forces. Woolf presents her as evidence that 'men's fighting instinct' is not an essential quality but is learned behaviour – 'if sanctioned the fighting instinct easily develops'. Sergeant Bonilla joined the army 'to supersede ... and to avenge' the death of the younger of her two daughters (both militiawomen). She herself has killed five or six enemies; from the sixth she has taken as trophy her horse. 'Five English parliamentaries look at this woman with the respectful and a bit restless admiration one feels for a "fauve" of an unknown species...'

The amazon Amalia rides in fact a magnificent dapple-grey horse, with glossy hair, which flatters like a parade horse ... This woman who has killed five men – but who feels not sure about the sixth – was for the envoys of the House of Commons an excellent introducer to the Spanish war.<sup>42</sup>

Woolf points as well to contemporary evidence of 'the growth of pacifism among the male sex today' in hope that reaction against Fascist State policies will reveal to the younger generation 'the need for emancipation from the old conception of virility' (Note 48, 322). The present study in Chapter Four closely examines processes of gendered identity formation in *The Waves*, where Woolf suggests that 'masculine' and 'feminine' characteristics are acquired through accretion and may be relatively interchangeable. In the discussion and especially in the endnotes of *Three Guineas* these ideas are pursued further. Future research on Woolf's representations of gendered performance could trace the development of her ideas and methods in this respect in other texts and in relation to a broader range of characters than has been possible in this study of the performance of particular versions of Victorian/Edwardian masculinity.

Equally, as an extension of this research it would be productive to compare Woolf's fictional representation of masculinity with those of women writers of the period, e.g. Vita Sackville-West, Djuna Barnes, Elizabeth Bowen, Rebecca West. In addition to such comparison of Woolf with her contemporaries, it could be interesting to study in terms of

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<sup>42</sup> (*The Martyrdom of Madrid*, Inedited Witnesses, by Louis Delaprée, pp. 34, 5, 6. Madrid, 1937), *Three Guineas* Chapter Three Note 15, 311.

contemporary interest in Woolf (as both novelist and intellectual) the forms (on stage, in film or other media) that adaptations of her novels have taken, and how far an autoethnographic reading of Woolf's novels (or other works) might effectively transfer to such adaptations.

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